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A SOLDIER OF VIRGINIA

STEVENSON

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"FOR SHAME, GENTLEMEN!"

A SOLDIER OF VIRGINIA

A TALE OF COLONEL WASHINGTON AND BRADDOCK'S DEFEAT

BY

BURTON EGBERT STEVENSON

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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NINTH IMPRESSION, DECEMBER, 1927

TO

THE MEMORY OF THE GALLANT MEN

WHO FELL

WITH DUST OF FAILURE BITTER ON THEIR LIPS

THAT OTHERS MIGHT BE TAUGHT

THE LESSON OF THE WILDERNESS

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A SOLDIER OF VIRGINIA

CHAPTER I

LIEUTENANT ALLEN GROWS INSULTING

It was not until he sneered at me openly across the board that I felt my self-control slipping from me. "Lieutenant Allen seems to have a poor opinion of the Virginia troops," I said, as calmly as I could.

"Egad, you are right, Lieutenant Stewart," he retorted, his eyes full on mine. "These two weeks past have I been trying to beat some sense into the fools, and 'pon my word, 't is enough to drive a man crazy to see them."

He paused to gulp down a glass of wine, of which I thought he had already drunk too much.

"I saw them this forenoon," cried Preston, who was sitting at Allen's right, "and was like to die of laughing. Poor Allen, there, was doing his best to teach them the manual, and curse me if they did n't hold their guns as though they burnt their fingers. And when they were ordered to 'bout face, they looked like nothing so much as the crowd I saw six months since at Newmarket, trying to get their money on Jason."

The others around the table laughed in concert,

and I could not but admit there was a grain of truth in the comparison.

"'T is granted," I said, after a moment, "that we Virginians have not the training of you gentlemen of the line; but we can learn, and at least no one can doubt our courage."

"Think you so?" and Allen laughed an insulting laugh. "There was that little brush at Fort Necessity last year, from which they brought away nothing but their skins, and damned glad they were to do that."

"They brought away their arms," I cried hotly, "and would have brought away all their stores and munitions, had the French kept faith and held their Indians off. That, too, in face of an enemy three times their number. The Virginians have no cause to blush for their conduct at Fort Necessity. The Coldstreams could have done no better."

Allen laughed again. "Ah, pardon me, Stewart," he said contemptuously, "I forgot that you were present on that glorious day."

I felt my cheeks crimson, and I looked up and down the board, but saw only sneering faces. Yes, there was one, away down at the farther end, which did not sneer, but looked at me I thought pityingly, which was infinitely worse. And then, of course, there was Pennington, who sat next to me, and who looked immeasurably shamed at the turn the dispute had taken. He placed a restraining hand upon my sleeve, but I shook it off impatiently.

"Yes, I was present," I answered, my heart aflame within me, "and our provincial troops learned a lesson there which even the gentlemen of the Forty-Fourth may one day be glad to have us teach them."

"Teach us?" cried Allen. "Curse me, sir, but you grow insulting! As for your learning, permit me to doubt your ability to learn anything. I have been trying to teach you provincials the rudiments of drill for the past fortnight, without success. In faith, you seem to know less now than you did before I began."

"Yes?" I asked, my anger quite mastering me. "But may not that be the fault of the teacher, Lieutenant Allen?"

He was out of his chair with an oath, and would have come across the table at me, but that those on either side held him back.

"I suppose you considered your words before you spoke them, Lieutenant Stewart?" asked Preston, looking at me coldly, and still keeping tight hold on the swearing man at his side.

"Fully," I answered, as I arose from my chair.

"You know, of course, that there remains only one thing to be done?" he continued, with a glance I thought compassionate, and so resented.

"Certainly," I answered again. "I may be able to teach the gentleman a very pretty thrust in tierce."

Upon this Allen fell to cursing again, but Preston silenced him with a gesture of his hand.

"I am very willing," I added, "to give him the

lesson at once, if he so desires. There is a charming place just without. I marked it as I passed to enter here, though with no thought I should so soon have need of it."

Now all this was merely the empty braggartry of youth, which I blush to remember. Nor was Allen the blustering bully I then deemed him, as I was afterwards to find out for myself. But I know of nothing which will so gloss over and disguise a man's real nature as a glass of wine too much.

"I shall be happy to give the lesson at once," I repeated.

"Yes, at once!" cried Allen savagely. "I 'll teach you, sir, to keep a civil tongue in your head when you address an officer of the line."

"It seems that we are both to learn a lesson, then," I said lightly. "It remains only to be seen which is the better teacher. Will one of the other gentlemen present act as my second?"

"I shall be happy to do so, Lieutenant Stewart," cried my neighbor, stepping forward.

"Ah, Lieutenant Pennington, thank you," and I looked into his face with pleasure, for it was the one, of all those present, which I liked the best. "Will you arrange the details for me?"

"May I speak to you a moment first?" he asked, looking at me anxiously.

"Certainly," I answered, and together we walked over to one corner of the room.

"Believe me, Lieutenant Stewart," he said, in a low voice, "I deem you a brave man, and I honor

you for defending the credit of your countrymen. I little thought, when I invited you to dine with us to-night, that there would be an issue such as this, for it can end in but one way. Allen is the best swordsman in the regiment, and a very devil when he is flushed with wine, as he is now."

"You would have me decline to meet him, then?" I asked, looking at him steadily.

"A word of apology," he stammered, but he did not meet my eyes. His heart was not in his words.

"Impossible," I said. "You forget that it was he who insulted me, and that an apology, if there be one, must come from him. He has insulted not only myself, but the whole body of Virginia volunteers. Though I were certain he would kill me, I could not draw back in honor. But I am not so certain," and I smiled down into his face. "There be some good swordsmen even in Virginia, sir."

"In faith, I am wondrous glad to hear it!" he cried, his face brightening. "I could not do less than warn you."

"And I thank you for your interest."

He held out his hand, and I clasped it warmly. Then we turned again to the group about the table.

"Well," cried Allen harshly, "does our Virginia friend desire to withdraw?"

"On the contrary," answered Pennington quietly, "he has positively refused to withdraw," and as he spoke, I saw that the others looked at me with attentive eyes. "There is a little green

just back of the barracks. Let us proceed to it," and he led the way toward the door.

Allen and I followed him, and the whole rabble of officers crowded after. In a moment we were at the place, and I walked to one side while the seconds conferred together. The full moon had risen above the treetops and flooded the clearing with still radiance. The tall, coarse grass waved slowly to and fro in the faint breeze, and away off in the forest I heard a wolf howling. The note, long and clear, rose and quivered in the air, faint and far away. And as it died to silence, for the first time the thought came to me that perchance my skill in fence might not avail. Well, thank heaven, there was none to whom my death would cause much sorrow, except — yes, Dorothy might care. At thought of her, the forest faded from before me, and I saw her again as I had seen her last, looking down upon me from the stair-head, and her kiss was warm upon my lips.

"We are ready, Lieutenant Stewart," called Pennington, and I shook my forebodings from me as I strode back toward him.

"Lieutenant Allen instructs me to say," began Preston, who was acting as his second, "that an apology on the part of Lieutenant Stewart will avert consequences which may, perhaps, be unpleasant."

"Lieutenant Stewart has no apologies to offer," I said shortly. "We are wasting time, gentlemen."

"As you will," and Preston turned back to Allen.

My coat was off in an instant, and I rolled the sleeve of my shirt above my elbow, the better to have it out of the way.

"May I have your sword, lieutenant?" asked Pennington, and he walked with it over to where Preston stood. He was back in a moment. "Allen's sword is fully an inch the longer," he said. "I have insisted that he secure a shorter weapon."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "Let him keep his sword. I am two or three inches the taller, and the advantage will still be on my side."

Pennington looked at me a moment in something like astonishment.

"Very well," he said at last, and stepped over and spoke another word to Preston. Then he came back and handed me my sword. "You are a gallant man, Lieutenant Stewart," he said as he did so.

"No more than many others in Virginia. 'T is that I mean to prove to-night," I answered lightly, and I saluted my adversary and felt his blade against my own. The first pass showed me that he was master of the weapon, but I was far from dismayed. I saw his eyes widen with surprise as I parried his thrust and pressed him so closely that he gave back a step. I smiled dryly, for I knew my advantage. The earliest lesson I had learned at the foils was that victory comes only to the man who keeps his coolness. I had drunk little wine, while Allen had drunk much, and his bloodshot eyes told of previous nights spent over the cups and dice. No, decidedly, I had little to fear. Allen must have read something of my thought in

my eyes, for his face flushed to a yet darker crimson, he pulled himself together with an effort, and by a trick which I had never seen, got inside my guard. His point was at my breast, but I leaped back and avoided it.

"Ah, you break!" he cried. "'T is not so easy as you fancied!"

I did not answer, contenting myself with playing more cautiously than I had done in my self-satisfaction of a moment before. Out of the corners of my eyes, I could see a portion of the circle of white faces about us, but they made no sound, and what their expression was I could not tell. The night air and the fast work were doing much to sober my opponent, and I felt his wrist grow stronger as he held down my point for an instant. It was his turn to smile, and I felt my cheeks redden at the expression of his face. Again he got inside my guard, but again I was out of reach ere he could touch me. I saw that I was making but a sorry showing, and I tried the thrust of which I had had the bad taste to boast, but he turned it aside quite easily. And then, of a sudden, I heard the beat of a horse's hoofs behind me.

"For shame, gentlemen!" cried a clear voice, which rang familiar in my ears. "Can the king's soldiers find no enemies to his empire that they must fight among themselves?"

Our seconds struck up our swords, and Allen looked over my shoulder with a curse.

"Another damned provincial, upon my life!" he cried. "Was there ever such impudence!"

As he spoke, the horseman swung himself from the saddle with an easy grace which declared long training in it, and walked coolly toward us.

"Lieutenant Stewart," he said to me sternly, "I did not think to find you thus engaged, else had I thought twice before placing a sword in your hand."

"The insult was one which could not be passed over, Colonel Washington," I answered, as I saluted him. "It was not to myself only, but to all the Virginia troops who serve his Majesty."

"So," sneered Allen, "'t is the hero of Fort Necessity! I can well believe him averse to fighting."

My cheeks were hot with anger and I saw Washington flush darkly, but he gazed at Allen coldly, and his voice was calm as ever when he spoke.

"It shall be my privilege at some future time," he said, "to call the gentleman to account for his words. At present, my sword is pledged to the king and may be drawn in no other service, more especially not in my own. I trust, Lieutenant Stewart, you will have the courage to sheathe your blade."

I hesitated. It was a hard thing to ask a man to do.

"Yes, put up your sword!" cried Allen scornfully. "Allow yourself to be reproved like a naughty boy by this hero who knows only how to retreat. On my soul, 't was well he arrived when

he did. I should have finished with you long ere this."

Washington looked at me steadily, without showing by the movement of a muscle that he had heard.

"And I promise you, Lieutenant Stewart," he continued, as though there had been no interruption, "that I shall be happy to act as your second, once this campaign is closed."

My cheeks flushed again, this time with pleasure, and I picked up my scabbard and sent my blade home.

"I must beg you to excuse me, Lieutenant Allen," I said. "Colonel Washington says right. My sword is not my own until we have met the French. Then I shall be only too pleased to conclude the argument."

Allen's lips curved in a disdainful smile.

"I thought you would be somewhat less eager to vindicate the courage of Virginia once you had pause for reflection," he sneered. "Provincials are all of a kind, and the breed is not a choice one."

I bit my lips to keep back the angry retort which leaped to them, and I saw Washington's hand trembling on his sword. It did me good to see that even he maintained his calmness only by an effort.

"Oh, come, Allen," cried Pennington, "you go too far. There can be no question of Lieutenant Stewart's courage. He was ready enough to meet you, God knows! Colonel Washington is right.

Our swords belong to the king while he has work for them," and the young fellow, with flushed face, held out his hand to Washington, who grasped it warmly.

"I thank you," he said simply. "I should be sorry to believe that all the king's officers could so far forget their duty. Come, lieutenant," he added to me, and taking me by the arm, he walked me out of the group, which opened before us, and I ventured to think that not all of the faces were unfriendly. "I have a message for Sir Peter Halket," he said, when we were out of earshot. "Show me his quarters, Tom, and so soon as I have finished my business, we will talk over this unhappy affair."

I led the way toward the building where the commander of the Forty-Fourth was quartered, too angry with myself and with the world to trust myself to speak. Why should I, who came of as good family as any in Virginia, be compelled to swallow insults as I had to-night? I almost regretted for the moment that I was in the service.

"But the time will come," I said, speaking aloud before I thought.

"Yes, the time will come, Tom," and Washington looked at me with a grim smile. "The time will come sooner than you think, perhaps, when these braggarts will be taught a lesson which they greatly need. Pray heaven the lesson be not so severe that it shake the king's empire on this continent."

"Shake the king's empire?" I repeated, looking at him in amazement. "I do not understand."

"No matter," he said shortly. "Here we are at headquarters. Do you wait for me. I will be but a moment;" and he ran up the steps, spoke a word to the sentry, and disappeared within.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF FONTENOY

My heart was thick with wrath as I walked up and down before Sir Peter Halket's quarters and waited for Colonel Washington to reappear. I asked myself again why I should be compelled to take the insults of any man. I clenched my hands together behind me, and swore that Allen should yet pay dearly. I recalled with bitterness the joy I had felt a week before, when I had received from Colonel Washington a letter in which he stated that he had procured my appointment as lieutenant in Captain Waggoner's Virginia company. I had been ahungered to make the campaign, and had donned my uniform with a light heart, — the same I had worn the year before, now much faded but inexpressibly dear to me, — mounted my horse, and ridden hotfoot to join the force here at Winchester. I had been received kindly enough by my companion officers of the provincial companies, many of whom were old friends. The contempt which the officers of the Forty-Fourth felt for the Virginia troops, and which they were at no pains to conceal, had vexed me somewhat from the first, yet it was not until to-night at the officers' mess, to which I had foolishly accepted

Pennington's invitation, that this contempt had grown unbearable. I had chanced to pull Pennington's horse out of a hole the day before, and so saved it a broken leg, but I saw now that I should have done better to refuse that invitation, courteously as it was given, and sincere as his gratitude had undoubtedly been.

So I walked up and down with a sore heart, as a child will when it has been punished for no fault, and prayed that we provincials might yet teach the regulars a lesson. Yet they were brave men, most of them, whom I could not but admire. A kindlier, gallanter man than Sir Peter Halket I had never seen, no, nor ever shall see. I noted the sentries pacing their beats before the colonel's quarters, erect, automatous, their guns a-glitter in the moonlight, their uniforms immaculate. I had seen them drill the day before, whole companies moving like one man, their ranks straight as a ramrod, — tramp, tramp, — turning as on a pivot moved by a single will. It was a wonderful sight to me who had never seen the like before, they were so strong, so confident, so seemingly invincible.

I turned and glanced again at the sentries, almost envying them their perfect carriage. Had they been men of iron, worked by a spring, they could not have moved with more clock-like regularity. And yet, no doubt, they had one time been country louts like any others. Truly there was much virtue in discipline. Yet still, and here I shook my head, the Virginia troops were brave

as any in the world, and would prove it. From the officers' quarters came the sound of singing and much laughter, and I flushed as I thought perchance it was at me they laughed. I have learned long since that no man's laughter need disturb me, so my heart be clear, but this was wisdom far beyond my years and yet undreamed of, and I shook my fist at the row of lighted windows.

"What, still fuming, Tom?" cried a voice at my elbow, and I turned to find Colonel Washington there; "and staring over toward the barracks as though you would like to gobble up every one within! Well, I admit you have cause," he added, and I saw that his face grew stern. "You may have to bear many such insults before the campaign is ended, but I hope and believe that the conduct of the Virginia troops will yet win them the respect of the regulars. You seem to have lost no time in getting to camp," he added, in a lighter tone.

"There was nothing to keep me at Riverview," I answered bitterly. "My absence is much preferred to my presence there. Had I not come to Winchester, I must have gone somewhere else. Your letter came most opportunely."

"You are out of humor to-night, Tom," said Washington, but his tone was kindly, and he placed one hand upon my arm as we turned back toward the cabin where my quarters were. He was scarce three years my senior, yet to me he seemed immeasurably the elder. I had always

thought of him as of a man, and I verily believe he was a man in mind and temper while yet a boy in body. I had ridden beside him many times over his mother's estate, and I had noticed — and chafed somewhat at the knowledge — that women much older than he always called him Mr. Washington, while even that little chit of a Polly Johnston called me Tom to my face, and laughed at me when I assumed an air of injured dignity. I think it was the fact that my temper was so the opposite of his own which drew him to me, and as for myself, I was proud to have such a friend, and of the chance to march with him again over the mountains against the French.

He knew well how to humor me, and walked beside me, saying nothing. I glanced at his face, half shamed of my petulance, and I saw that he was no longer smiling. His lips were closed in that firm straight line which I had already seen once or twice, and which during years of trial became habitual to him. My own petty anger vanished at the sight.

"I have not yet thanked you, Colonel Washington," I said at last, "for securing me my appointment. I was eating my heart out to make the campaign, but saw no way of doing so until your message reached me."

"Why, Tom," he laughed, "you were the first of whom I thought when General Braddock gave me leave to fill some of the vacancies. Did you think I had so soon forgot the one who saved my life at Fort Necessity?"

I opened my mouth to protest, but he silenced me with a gesture.

"I can see it as though it were here before us," he continued. "The French and Indians on the knoll yonder, my own men kneeling in the trenches, almost waist-deep in water, trying in vain to keep their powder dry; here and there a wounded man lying in the mud and cursing, the rain and mist over it all, and the night coming on. And then, suddenly, the rush of Indians at our back, and over the breastwork. I had my pistol in my hand, you remember, Tom, but the powder flashed in the pan, and the foremost of the savages was upon me. I saw his tomahawk in the air, and I remember wondering who would best command when I was dead. But your aim was true and your powder dry, and when the tomahawk fell, it fell harmless, with its owner upon it."

For a moment neither of us spoke. My eyes were wet at thought of the scene which I so well remembered, and when I turned to him, I saw that he was still brooding over this defeat, which had rankled as a poisoned arrow in his breast ever since that melancholy morning we had marched away from the Great Meadows with the French on either side and the Indians looting the baggage in the rear. As we reached my quarters, we turned by a common impulse and continued onward through the darkness.

"This expedition must be more fortunate," he said at last, as though in answer to his own thought. "A thousand regulars, as many more provincials,

guns, and every equipage, — yes, it is large enough and strong enough, unless " —

" Unless ? " I questioned, as he paused.

" Unless we walk headlong to our own destruction," he said. " But no, I won't believe it. The general has been bred in the Coldstreams and knows nothing of frontier fighting. But he is a brave man, an honest man, and he will learn. Small wonder he believes in discipline after serving half a century in such a regiment. Have you ever heard the story of their fight at Fontenoy, ten years since, when they lost two hundred and forty men ? I heard it three nights ago at the general's table, and 't was enough to make a man weep for very pity that such valor should count for naught."

" Tell it me," I cried, for if there is one thing I love above all others, — yea, even yet, when I must sit useless by, — it is the tale of brave deeds nobly done.

" 'T was on the eleventh day of May, seventeen forty-five," he said, " that the English and the Dutch met the French, who were under Marshal Saxe. Louis the Fifteenth himself was on the field, with the Grand Dauphin by his side and a throng of courtiers about him, for he knew how much depended on the issue of this battle. A redoubt, held by the famous Guards, bristling with cannon, covered the French position. The Dutch, appalled at the task before them, refused to advance, but his Grace of Cumberland, who commanded the English, rose equal to the moment. He formed his troops in column, the Coldstreams at its head,

and gave the word for the assault. The batteries thundered, the redoubt was crowned with flame, but the Coldstreams turned neither to the right nor left. Straight on they marched, — to annihilation, as it seemed, — reforming as they went, over hill and gully, as steadily as on parade. At last they reached their goal, and an instant's silence fell upon the field as they faced the French. The English officers raised their hats to their adversaries, who returned the salute as though they were at Versailles, not looking in the eyes of death.

"'Gentlemen of the French Guard,' cried Lord Charles Hay, 'fire, if you please.'

"'Impossible, monsieur,' cried the Count of Hauteroche; 'the French Guards never fire first. Pray, fire yourselves.'

"The order was given, and the French ranks fell as grain before the sickle. They gave way, the Coldstreams advancing in perfect order, firing volley after volley. The officers, with their rattans, turned the men's muskets to the right or left, as need demanded. Nothing could stop that terrible approach, resistless as a whirlwind, and French and Swiss broke themselves against it, only to be dashed back as spray from a rocky coast. Regiment after regiment was repulsed, and the Coldstreams still advanced. Saxe thought the battle lost, and begged the king and the dauphin to flee while time permitted. At the last desperate moment, he rallied the artillery and all the forces of his army for a final effort. The artillery was

massed before the English, and they had none to answer it. The king himself led the charge against their flanks, which the Dutch should have protected. But the Dutch preferred to remain safely in the rear. The Coldstreams stood their ground, reforming their ranks with perfect coolness, until Cumberland saw it were madness to remain, and ordered the retreat. And it was more glorious than the advance. With only half their number on their feet, they faced about, without disorder, their ranks steady and unwavering, and moved off sullenly and slowly, as though ready at any moment to turn again and rend the ranks of the victors. It was a deed to match Thermopylæ."

I lifted my hat from my head, and my lips were trembling.

"I salute them," I said. "'T was well done. And was General Braddock present on that day?"

"He commanded one battalion of the regiment. It was for his gallantry there that he was promoted to the senior majorship."

"I shall not forget it." And then I added, "Perhaps the story you have told me will give me greater patience with our drill-master."

"I trust so, at least," said Washington, with a smile; "else I fear there will be little peace for you in the army. I was affected by the story, Tom, no less than you have been, but after I had left the hall, with its glamour of lights and gold lace and brilliant uniforms, I wondered if this discipline would count amid the forests of the Ohio as it did on the plains of Europe. I fancy, in the battle that is

to come, there will be no question of who shall fire first, and a regiment which keeps its formation will be a fair mark for the enemy. Do you know, Tom, my great hope is that the French will send a scouting party of their Indian allies to ambush us, and that in defeating them, our commander may learn something of the tactics which he must follow to defeat the French."

As for myself, I confess I shared none of these forebodings, and welcomed the chance to turn our talk to a more cheerful subject.

"But about yourself?" I questioned. "There is much I wish to know. Until your note reached me, I had not heard a word from you since you rode away from Mount Vernon with Dinwiddie's messenger."

His face cleared, and he looked at me with a little smile.

"We went direct to Williamsburg," he said, "where I first met the general, and told him what I know about the country which he has to cross. He treated me most civilly, despite some whisperings which went on behind my back, and shortly after sent me a courteous invitation to serve on his staff. Of course I accepted, — you know how it irked me to remain at home, — but I gave him at the same time a statement of my reason for quitting the Virginia service, — that I could not consent to be outranked by every subaltern who held a commission from the king."

I nodded, for the question was not new to me, and had already caused me much heart-burning.

It was not until long afterwards that I saw the general's letter among Mrs. Washington's treasures at Mount Vernon, but it seems to me worthy of reproduction here. Thus it ran: —

WILLIAMSBURG, 2 March, 1755.

SIR, — The General having been informed that you expressed some desire to make the campaign, but that you declined it upon some disagreeableness that you thought might arise from the regulations of command, has ordered me to acquaint you that he will be very glad of your company in his family, by which all inconveniences of that kind will be obviated.

I shall think myself very happy to form an acquaintance with a person so universally esteemed, and shall use every opportunity of assuring you how much I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

ROBERT ORME, Aide-de-Camp.

Had Braddock heeded the advice of the man whom he asked to join his family, the event might have been different. But I must not anticipate, and I find my hardest task in writing what is before me is to escape the shadow of the disaster which was to come. At that time, and, indeed, until the storm burst, few of us had penetration to discern the cloud on the horizon, — Colonel Washington, Mr. Franklin, and a few others, perhaps, but certainly not I. It is easy to detect mistakes after the event, and to conduct a campaign on paper, yet few who saw that martial array of

troops, with its flying banners and bright uniforms, would have ordered the advance differently.

But to return.

"It was not until three days ago," continued Washington, "that I was able to rejoin the general, and he intrusted me with a message to Colonel Halket, which I delivered this evening. I must start back to Mount Vernon to-morrow and place my affairs in order, and will then join the army at Cumberland, whence the start is to be made."

"And what make of man is the general?" I asked.

A cloud settled on Washington's face.

"Why, Tom," he said at last, "I have seen so little of him that I may misjudge him. He is at least brave and honest, two great things in a commander. As for the rest, it is yet too soon to judge. But you have told me nothing about your affairs. How did you leave them all at Riverview?"

"I left them well enough," I answered shortly.

Washington glanced keenly at my downcast face, for indeed the memory of what had occurred at Riverview was not pleasant to me.

"Did you quarrel with your aunt before you came away?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," I said, and stopped. How could I say more?

"I feared it might come to that," he said gravely. "Your position there has been a false one from the start. And yet I see no way to amend it."

We walked on in silence for some time, each

busy with his own thoughts, and mine at least were not pleasant ones.

"Tom," said Washington suddenly, "what was the quarrel about? Was it about the estate?"

"Oh, no," I answered. "We shall never quarrel about the estate. We have already settled all that. It was something quite different."

I could not tell him what it was; the secret was not my own.

He looked at me again for a moment, and then, stopping suddenly, wheeled me around to face him, and caught my hand.

"I think I can guess," he said warmly, "and I wish you every happiness, Tom."

My lips were trembling so I could not thank him, but I think he knew what was in my heart.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH I INTRODUCE MYSELF

I DOUBT not that by this time the reader is beginning to wonder who this fellow is that has claimed his attention, and so, since there is no one else to introduce me, I must needs present myself.

It so happened that when that stern old lion, Oliver Cromwell, crushed the butterfly named Charles Stuart at Worcester in the dim dawn of the third day of September, 1651, and utterly routed the army of that unhappy prince, one Thomas Stewart fell into the hands of the Roundheads, as, indeed, did near seven thousand others of the Royalist army. Now this Thomas Stewart had very foolishly left a pretty estate in Kincardine, together with a wife and two sturdy boys, to march under the banner of the Princeling, as he conceived to be his duty, and after giving and taking many hard knocks, here he was in the enemy's hands, and Charles Stuart a fugitive. They had one and all been declared by Parliament rebels and traitors to the Commonwealth, so the most distinguished of the captives were chosen for examples to the rest, and three of them, the Earl of Derby among the number, were sent forthwith to the block, where they comported themselves as

brave men should, and laid down their heads right cheerfully.

The others were sent to prison, since it was manifestly impossible to execute them all, — nor was Cromwell so bloodthirsty, now the rebellion was broken utterly, — and some sixteen hundred of them were sentenced to be transported to the colony of Virginia, which had long been a dumping ground for convicts and felons and political scapegoats. Hither, then, they came, in ships crowded to suffocation, and many dead upon the way and thrown to the sharks for burial, but for some reason only one of the ships stopped here, while the others went on to Barbadoes to discharge their living freight. I more than suspect that Cromwell's agents soon discovered the Commonwealth had few friends in Virginia, and feared the effect of letting loose here so many of the Royalist soldiers. At any rate, this one ship dropped anchor at Hampton, and its passengers, to the number of about three hundred, were sold very cheaply to the neighboring planters. I may as well say here that all of them were well treated by their Cavalier masters, and many of them afterwards became the founders of what are now the most prominent families in the colony.

Now one of those who had been sold in Virginia was the Thomas Stewart whom I have already mentioned, and whom neither stinking jail nor crowded transport had much affected. Doubtless, no matter what the surroundings, he had only to close his eyes to see again before him the green

hills and plashing brooks of Kincardine, with his own home in the midst, and the bonny wife waiting at the door, a boy on either side. Alas, it was only thus he was ever to see them this side heaven. He was bought by a man named Nicholas Spenser, who owned a plantation on the Potomac in Westmoreland County, and there he worked, first as laborer and then as overseer, for nigh upon ten years. His master treated him with great kindness, and at the Restoration, having made tenfold his purchase money by him, gave him back his freedom.

Despite the years and the hard work in the tobacco-fields, Stewart's thoughts had often been with the wife and children he had left behind in Scotland, and he prevailed upon Spenser to secure him passage in one of his ships for London, where he arrived early in 1662. He made his way back to Kincardine, where he found his estate sequestered, his wife and one child dead in poverty, the other disappeared. From a neighbor he learned that the boy had run away to sea after his mother's death, but what his fate had been he never knew. Weary and disheartened, Stewart retraced his steps to London, and after overcoming obstacles innumerable, occasioned mostly by his want of money, laid his case before the king. Charles listened to him kindly enough, for his office had not yet grown a burden to him, and finally granted him a patent for two thousand acres of land along the upper Potomac. It was a gift which cost the king nothing, and one of a hundred such he

bestowed upon his favorites as another man would give a crust of bread for which he had no use. Stewart returned to Virginia with his patent in his pocket, and built himself a home in what was then a wilderness.

In five or six years he had cleared near three hundred acres of land, had it planted in sweet-scented tobacco, for which the Northern Neck was always famous, bought two-score negroes to tend it, and began to see light ahead. It was at this time that he met Marjorie Usner, while on a visit to Williamsburg, and he married her in 1670, having in the mean time erected a more spacious residence than the rude log-hut which had previously been his home. He was at that time a man nigh fifty years of age, but handsome enough, I dare say, and well preserved by his life of outdoor toil. Certainly Mistress Marjorie, who must have been much younger, made him a good wife, and when he died, in 1685, he left a son and a daughter, besides an estate valued at several thousands of pounds, accumulated with true Scottish thrift. It was this daughter who named the estate Riverview, and though the house was afterwards remodeled, the name was never changed. The Stewarts continued to live there, marrying and giving in marriage, and growing ever wealthier, for the next half century, at the end of which time occurred the events that brought me into being.

In 1733, Thomas Stewart, great-grandson of the Scotsman, was master of Riverview. His portrait, which hangs to-day to the left of the fire-

place in the great hall, shows him a white-haired, red-faced, choleric gentleman, with gray eyes and proudly smiling mouth. He had been chosen a member of the House of Burgesses, as had his father before him, and was one of the most considerable men in the county. His son, Tom, was just twenty-one, and had inherited from his father the hasty temper and invincible stubbornness which belong to all the Stewarts.

It was in the fall of 1733 that they made the trip to Williamsburg which was to have such momentous consequences. The House of Burgesses was in session, and Mr. Stewart, as the custom was, took his whole family with him to the capital. I fancy I can see them as they looked that day. The great coach, brought from London at a cost of so many thousand pounds of tobacco, is polished until it shines again. The four horses are harnessed to it, and Sambo, mouth stretched from ear to ear, drives it around to the front of the mansion, where a broad flight of stone steps leads downward from the wide veranda. The footmen and outriders spring to their places, their liveries agleam with buckles, the planter and his lady and their younger son enter the coach, while young Tom mounts his horse and prepares to ride by the window. The odorous cedar chests containing my lady's wardrobe are strapped behind or piled on top, the negroes form a grinning avenue, the whip cracks, and they are off, half a dozen servants following in an open cart. It is a four days' journey to Williamsburg, over roads whose rough-

ness tests the coach's strength to the uttermost but it is the one event of all the year to this isolated family, and small wonder that they look forward to it with eager anticipation.

Once arrived at Williamsburg, what craning of necks and waving of handkerchiefs and kissing of hands to acquaintances, as the coach rolls along the wide, white, sandy street, scorching in the sun, with the governor's house, called by courtesy a palace, at one end, and the College of William and Mary at the other, and perhaps two hundred straggling wooden houses in between. The coaches and chariots which line the street give earnest of the families already assembled from Princess Ann to Fairfax and the Northern Neck. My lady notes that the Burkes have at last got them a new chariot from London, and her husband looks with appreciative eyes at the handsome team of matched grays which draw it. As for young Tom, his eyes, I warrant, are on none of these, but on the bevy of blooming girls who promenade the side-path, arrayed in silks and satins and brocades, their eyes alight, their cheeks aglow with the joy of youth and health. Small blame to him, say I, for that is just where my own eyes would have been.

That very night Governor Gooch gave a ball at his palace, and be sure the Stewart family was there, my lady in her new London gown of flowered damask in the very latest mode, and Tom in his best suit of peach-blossom velvet, and in great hopes of attracting to himself some of the bright

eyes he had seen that afternoon. Nor was he wholly unsuccessful, for one pair of black eyes rested on his for a moment, — they were those of Mistress Patricia Wyeth, — and he straightway fell a victim to their charms, as what young man with warm heart and proper spirit would not? Young Tom must himself have possessed unusual attractions, or a boldness in wooing which his son does not inherit, for at the end of a week he disturbed his father at his morning dram to inform him that he and Mistress Patricia had decided to get married.

"Married!" cried the elder Stewart. "Why, damme, sir, do you know who the Wyeths are?"

"I know who Patricia is," answered young Tom very proudly, his head well up at this first sign of opposition. "I care naught about the rest of them."

"But I care, sir!" shouted his father. "Why, the girl won't have a shilling to bless herself with. Old Wyeth has gambled away every penny he possesses, and a good many more than he possesses, too, so they tell me, at his infernal horse-racing and cock-fighting, and God knows what else. A gentleman may play, sir, — I throw the dice occasionally, myself, and love to see a well-matched race as well as any man, — but he ceases to be a gentleman the moment he plays beyond his means, — a fact which you will do well to remember. A pretty match for a Stewart 'pon my word!"

During this harangue young Tom would have interrupted more than once, but his father silenced

him with a passionate waving of his arm. At last he was compelled to pause for want of breath to say more, and the boy got in a word.

"All this is beside the point, father," he said hotly. "My word is given, and I intend to keep it. Even if it were not given, I should still do my best to win Patricia, because I love her."

"Love her, and welcome!" cried his father. "Marry her, if you want to. But you 'll never bring a pauper like that inside my house while I am alive."

"Nor after you are dead, if you do not wish it," answered Tom, with his head higher in the air than ever.

"No, nor after I am dead!" thundered the old man, his anger no doubt carrying him farther than he intended going. "You are acting like a scoundrel, sir. You know well enough I can't cut you out of the estate, since you are the eldest, so you think to take advantage of me."

"Never fear, sir," cried Tom, his lips white with anger and his eyes ablaze. "You shall ask me back to Riverview yourself ere I return there; yes, and beg my wife's pardon for insulting her."

"Then, by God, you 'll never return!" snorted his father, and without waiting to hear more, Tom stalked from the room and from the house. I think even then his father would have called him back, had the boy given him the chance, and his face was less red than usual when he heard the street door slam.

Of course there was a great to-do immediately.

Tom's mother interceded for him, and I doubt not a single word on his part would have won full pardon from his father, but one was no less stubborn than the other, and the word was never spoken. When Mistress Patricia heard of the quarrel, she straightway informed her lover that she would never marry him and ruin his inheritance, and returned to her home above Charles City, taking her old reprobate of a father with her, where he died not long afterwards, perhaps finding life not worth living when there remained no one who would take his wagers.

At the close of the session, the Stewart coach rolled back to Riverview, but young Tom did not ride beside it. He remained at Williamsburg, and managed to pick up a scanty practice as an attorney, for he had read a little law in want of something better to do, and to fit himself for his coming honors as a member of the House of Burgesses. And at Riverview his father moped in his office and about his fields, growing ever more crabbed and more obstinate, and falling into a rage whenever any one dared mention Tom's name before him.

It was in the spring of 1734 that Tom Stewart mounted his horse and rode out of Williamsburg across the Chickahominy, to try his fortune once more with Patricia Wyeth. The winter had been a hard one for a man brought up as Tom had been, and that suit of peach-bloom velvet had long since been converted into bread. Yet still he made a gallant figure when, on the evening of an April day, he cantered up the road to Patricia's home, and I

dare say the heart of the owner of those bright eyes which peeped out upon him from an upper window beat faster when they saw him coming. But it was a very demure little maiden who met him at the great door as he entered, and gave him her hand to kiss. She was all in white, with a sprig of blossoms in her hair, and she must have made a pretty picture standing there, and one to warm the heart of any man.

Of the week that followed, neither my father nor my mother ever told me much, — its memories were too sweet to trust to words, perhaps, — but the event was, that on the first day of May, 1734, Thomas Stewart, attorney, and Patricia Wyeth, spinster, were made man and wife in Westover church by the Reverend Peter Fontaine, of sainted memory. How well I recall his benign face, and what tears of affectionate remembrance brimmed my eyes when I heard, not long ago, that he was dead! The closing sentences of his will show how he ever thought of others and not of himself, for he wrote: "My will and desire is, that I may have no public funeral, but that my corpse may be accompanied by a few of my nearest neighbors; that no liquors be given to make any of the company drunk, — many instances of which I have seen, to the great scandal of the Christian religion and abuse of so solemn an ordinance. I desire none of my family to go in mourning for me." His sister sent me a copy of the will, and a very pretty letter, in which she told me how her brother often spoke of me, and wished me to have his Bible. It is there on the

shelf at my bedside, and while God gives me life I will read in no other.

It was in the modest Wyeth homestead, on the bank of the James, that my father and mother entered upon their honeymoon. Of the depth of their love for each other I know best of all, and the summer slipped away on golden wings. My father thought no more of returning to Williamsburg, nor did he greatly regret Riverview. He wrote a formal letter to his mother announcing his marriage, but no answer came to it, and I doubt not that worthy woman sobbed herself to sleep more than once in grieving over the obstinacy of her husband and her son. Dear lady, it was this trouble which did much to shorten her days, and the end came soon afterwards. 'T is said that on her deathbed she tried to soften her husband's heart against their boy, but with such ill success that she fell sobbing into the sleep from which she was never to awaken. To such a degree can a fault persisted in change the natural humor of a man.

My father, perhaps, hoped for a reply to his letter, but he showed no sign of disappointment when none came, and never spoke upon the subject to my mother. He soon found enough in his affairs at home to occupy his mind, for old Samuel Wyeth had left the estate sadly incumbered with his debts, and more than half of it was sacrificed to save the rest. With care and frugality, there yet remained enough to live on, and for the first year, at least, there came no cloud to dim their happiness. Their cup of joy was full to overflowing, so my mother

often told me, when, on the night of April 15, 1735, a child was born to them. It was a boy, and a week later, before the altar of the little Westover church, its worthy rector christened the child "Thomas Stewart," the fifth of his line in the New World.

CHAPTER IV

THE ENDING OF THE HONEYMOON

Besides my father and my mother, the figure which stands out most clearly in my memory of my childhood is that of the man who christened me. I cannot remember the time when I did not know and love him. He was a tall, well-built man, with kindly face and clear blue eyes which darkened when any emotion stirred him, and rode — how well I remember it! — a big, bony, gray horse. It was on this horse's back that I took my first ride, when I was scarce out of petticoats, and often after that, held carefully before him on the saddle, or, as I grew older, bumping joyously behind, my arms about his waist. My place was always on his knee when he was within our doors, and he held me there with unfailing good humor during his long talks with my mother, of which I, for the most part, comprehended nothing, except that oftentimes they spoke of me, and then he would smooth my hair with great tenderness. But I sat there quite content, and sometimes dozed off with my head against his flowered waistcoat, — it was his one vanity, — and wakened only when he set me gently down.

It was not until I grew older that I learned some-

thing of his history. One day, he had seized time from his parish work to take me for a ramble along the river, and as we reached the limit of our walk and sat down for a moment's rest before starting homeward, and looked across the wide water, I asked him, with a childish disregard for his feelings, if it were true that his father was a Frenchman, adding that I hoped it were not true, because I did not like the French.

"Yes, it is true," he answered, and looked down at me, smiling sadly. "Shall I tell you the story, Thomas?"

I nodded eagerly, for I loved to listen to stories, especially true ones.

"When Louis Fourteenth was King of France," he began, and I think he took a melancholy pleasure in telling it, "he issued a decree commanding all the Protestants, who in France are called Huguenots, to abjure their faith and become Catholics, or leave the kingdom. He had oftentimes before promised them protection, but he was growing old and weak, and thought that this might help to save his soul, which was in great need of saving, for he had been a wicked king. My father and my mother were Huguenots, and they chose to leave their home rather than give up their faith, as did many thousand others, and after suffering many hardships, escaped to England, with no worldly possession save the clothes upon their backs, but with a great treasure in heaven and an abiding trust in the Lord. They had six children, and after giving us a good education, especially as to

our religion, committed us to the providence of a covenant God to seek our fortunes in the wide world. All of us came to America, although Moses and John have since returned to England. James is a farmer in King William County, Francis is minister of York-Hampton parish, and sister Ruth lives with me, as you know."

A great deal more he told me, which slipped from my memory, for I was thinking over what he had already said.

"And your mother and father," I asked, as we started back together, "fled from France rather than give up their faith?"

"Yes," he answered, and smiled down into my eyes, raised anxiously to his.

"And were persecuted just as the early martyrs were?"

"Yes, very much the same. All of their goods were taken from them, and they were long in prison."

"But they were never sorry?"

"No, they were never sorry. No one is ever sorry for doing a thing like that."

I trotted on in silence for a moment, holding tight to his kindly hand, and revolving this new idea in my mind. At last I looked up at him, big with purpose.

"I am going to do something like that some day," I said.

He gazed down at me, his eyes shining queerly.

"God grant that you may have the strength, my boy," he said. He bent and kissed me, and

we returned to the house together without saying another word.

It was the custom of the Fontaine family to hold a meeting every year to give thanks for the deliverance from persecution of their parents in France, and I remember being present with my father and mother at one of these meetings when I was seven or eight years old. One passage of the sermon he preached on that occasion remained fixed indelibly in my mind. He took his text from Romans, "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He applied the duty thus enjoined to the Fontaine family, saying, —

"For many weary months was our father forced to shift among forests and deserts for his safety, because he had dared to preach the word of God to the innocent and sincere people among whom he lived, and who desired to be instructed in their duty and to be confirmed in their faith. The forest afforded him a shelter and the rocks a resting-place, but his enemies gave him no quiet, and pursued him even to these fastnesses, until finally, of his own accord, he delivered himself to them. They loaded his hands with chains, a dungeon was his abode, and his feet stuck fast in the mire. Murderers and thieves were his companions, yet even among them did he pursue his labors, until God, by means of a pious gentlewoman, who had seen and pitied his sufferings, relieved him."

To my childish imagination, the picture thus painted was a real and living one, and filled me

with a singular exaltation. I think each of us at some time of his life has felt, as I did then, a desire to suffer for conscience' sake.

The preachers of Virginia were, as a whole, anything but admirable, a condition due no doubt to the worldly spirit which pervaded the church on both sides of the ocean. The average parson was then — and many of them still are — coarse and rough, as contact with the forests and waste places of the world will often make men, even godly ones. But many of them were worse than that, gamblers and drunkards. They hunted the fox across country with great halloo, mounted on fast horses of their own. They attended horse-races and cock-fights, almost always with some money on the outcome, and frequently with a horse or cock entered in the races or the pittings. And when the sport was over, they would accompany the planters home to dinner, which ended in a drinking-bout, and it was seldom the parson who went under the table first. One fought a duel in the graveyard behind his church, — our own little Westover church, it was, — and succeeded in pinking his opponent through the breast, for which he had incontinently to return to England; another stopped the communion which he was celebrating, and bawled out to his warden, "Here, George, this bread 's not fit for a dog," nor would he go on with the service until bread more to his liking had been brought; another married a wealthy widow, though he had already a wife living in England. His bishop was compelled to recall him, but I never heard that

he was discharged from holy orders. Another on a certain Saturday called a meeting of his vestry, and when they refused to take some action which he desired, thrashed them all soundly, and on the next day added insult to injury by preaching to them from the text, "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair." I should like to have seen the faces of the vestrymen while the sermon was in progress! It was not an unusual sight to see the parson riding home from some great dinner tied fast in his chaise to keep him from falling out, as the result of over-indulgence in the planter's red wine. But our worthy pastor, during his forty years' ministry in Charles City parish, was concerned in no such escapades, and I count it one of the great happinesses of my life that I had the good fortune to fall under the influence of such a man. A passage of a letter written by him to one of his brothers in England on the subject of preserving health gives an outline of the rules of his life. After commending active exercise in the open air on foot and on horseback, he says, "I drink no spirituous liquors at all; but when I am obliged to take more than ordinary fatigue, either in serving my churches or other branches of duty, I take one glass of good old Madeira wine, which revives me, and contributes to my going through without much fatigue."

One other figure do I recall distinctly. We had driven to church as usual one Sunday morning in early fall, and when we came in sight of the little

brick building, peeping through its veil of ivy, I was surprised to see the parishioners in line on either side the path which led to the broad, low doorway. Mr. Fontaine stood there as though awaiting some one, and when he saw us, came down the steps and spoke a word to father. In a moment, from down the road came the rumble of heavy wheels, and then a great, gorgeous, yellow chariot, with four outriders, swung into view and drew up with a flourish before the church. The footmen sprang to the door, opened it, and let down the steps. I, who was staring with all my eyes, as you may well believe, saw descend a little old man, very weak and very tremulous, yet holding his head proudly, and after him a younger. They came slowly up the walk, the old man leaning heavily upon the other's shoulder and nodding recognition to right and left. As they drew near, I caught the gleam of a great jewel on his sword-hilt, and then of others on finger, knee, and instep. The younger bore himself very erect and haughty, yet I saw the two were fashioned in one mould. On up the steps and into the church they went, Mr. Fontaine before and we after them. They took their seats in the great pew with the curious carving on the back, which I had never before seen occupied.

"Who are the gentlemen, mother?" I whispered, so soon as I could get her ear.

"It is Colonel Byrd and his son come back from London," she answered. "Now take your eyes off them and attend the service."

Take my eyes off them I did, by a great effort of will, but I fear I heard little of the service, for my mind was full of the great house on the river-bank, which it had once been my fortune to visit. Mr. Fontaine had taken me with him in his chaise for a pastoral call at quite the other end of his parish, and as we returned, we were caught in a sudden storm of rain. My companion had hesitated for a moment, and then turned his horse's head through a gateway with a curious monogram in iron at the top, along an avenue of stately tulip-trees, and so to the door of a massive square mansion of red brick, which stood on a little knoll overlooking the James. The door was closed and the windows shuttered, but half a dozen negroes came running from the back at the sound of our wheels and took us in out of the storm. A mighty fire was started in the deep fireplace, and as I stood steaming before it, I looked with dazzled eyes at the great carved staircase, at the paintings and at the books, of which there were many hundreds.

Presently the old overseer, whom Mr. Fontaine addressed as Murray, and who had grown from youth to trembling age in the Byrd service, came in to offer us refreshment, and over the table they fell to gossiping.

"Westover 's not the place it was," said Murray, sipping his flip disconsolately, — "not the place it was while Miss Evelyn was alive. There was no other like it in Virginia then. Why, it was always full of gay company, and the colonel kept a nigger down there at the gate to invite in every traveler

who passed. But all that 's changed, and has been these six year."

Mr. Fontaine nodded over his tea.

"Yes," he said, "Evelyn's death was a great blow to her father."

"You may well say that, sir," assented Murray, with a sigh. "He was never the same man after. He used to sit there at that window and watch her in the garden, after they came back from London, and every day he saw her whiter and thinner. At night, after she was safe abed, I have seen him walking up and down over there along the river, sobbing like a baby. And when she died, he was like a man dazed, thinking, perhaps, it was he who had killed her."

"I know," nodded Mr. Fontaine. "I was here." There was a moment's silence. I was bursting with questions, but I did not dare to speak.

"The young master took him back to London after that," went on Murray, "hoping that a change would do him good and take his mind off Miss Evelyn, but I doubt he 'll ever get over it. While they were in London, Sir Godfrey Kneller painted him and Miss Evelyn. Would you like to see the pictures, sir?"

"Yes, I should like to see them," said Mr. Fontaine softly. "Evelyn was very dear to me."

They were hanging side by side in the great hall, and even my childish eyes saw their strength and beauty. His was a narrow, patrician face, beautiful as a woman's, looking from a wealth of brown curls, soft and flowing. The little pucker

at the corners of his mouth bespoke his relish of a jest, and the high nose and well-placed eyes his courage and spirit. But it was at the other I looked the longest. She was seated upon a grassy bank, with the shadows of the evening gathering about her. In the branches above her head gleamed a red-bird's brilliant plumage. On her lap lay a heap of roses, and in her hand she held a shepherd's crook. Her gown, of pale blue satin, was open at the throat, and showed its fair sweet fullness and the bosom's promise. Her face was pensive, — sad, almost, — the lips just touching, a soft light in the great dark eyes. I had never seen such a picture, — nor have I ever looked upon another such. I can close my eyes and see it even now. But the storm had passed, and it was time to go.

"Why did Miss Evelyn die?" I questioned, as soon as we were out of the avenue of tulips and in the highway.

He looked down at me a moment, and seemed hesitating for an answer.

"She loved a man in London," he said. "Her father would not let her marry him, and brought her home. She was not strong, and gossips say her heart was broken."

"But why would he not let her marry him?" I asked.

"He was not of her religion. Her father thought he was acting for her good."

I pondered on this for a time in silence, and found here a question too great for my small brain.

"But was he right?" I asked at last, falling back upon my companion's greater knowledge.

"It is hard to say," he answered softly. "Perhaps he was, and yet I have come to think there is little to choose between one sect and another, so Christ be in them and the man honest."

He looked out across the fields with tender eyes and I slipped my hand in his. A vision of her sad face danced before me and I fell asleep, my head within his arm, to waken only when he lifted me down at our journey's end.

All this came back to me with the vividness which childish recollections sometimes have, as I sat there in the pew at my mother's side. Only I could not quite believe that this little wrinkled old man was the same who looked so proudly from Kneller's canvas. But when the service ended and he stopped to exchange a word with father, I saw the face was indeed the same, though now writ over sadly by the hand of time weighted down with sorrow. It was the only time I ever saw him in the flesh, for he was near the end and died soon after. He was buried beside his daughter in the little graveyard near his home. It was Mr. Fontaine who closed his eyes in hope of resurrection and spoke the last words above his grave, — beloved in this great mansion as in the lowliest cabin at Charles City.

My pen would fain linger over the portrait of this sainted man, which is the fairest and most benign in the whole gallery of my youth, but I must turn to another subject, — to the cloud which

began to shadow my life at my tenth year, and which still shadows it to-day. For the first six or seven years of their married life my father and mother were, I believe, wholly and unaffectedly happy. When I think of them now, I think of them only as they were during that time, and wonder how many of the married people about me could say as much. Their means were small, and they lived a quiet life, which had few luxuries. But as time went on, my father began to chafe at the petty economies which the smallness of their income rendered necessary. He had been bred amid the luxuries of a great estate, where the house was open to every passer-by, and it vexed him that he could not now show the same wide hospitality. I think he yet had hopes of succeeding to his father's estate, out of which, indeed, there was no law in Virginia to keep him should he choose to claim it. Whatever his thoughts may have been, he grew gradually to live beyond his means, and as the years passed, he had recourse to the cards and dice in the hope, no doubt, of recouping his vanishing fortune. It was true then, as it is true now and always will be true, that the man who gambles because he needs the money is sure to lose, and affairs went from bad to worse until the final disaster came.

It was just after my tenth birthday. My mother and I were sitting together on the broad porch which overlooked the river. She had been reading to me from the Bible, — the parable of the talents, — in which and in the kind advice of

Parson Fontaine she found her only comfort in the anxious days which had gone before, and which I knew nothing of. But the lengthening shadows finally fell across the page, and she closed the book and held it on her knee, while she talked to me about my lessons and a ramble we had planned for the morrow. The red of the sunset still lingered in the west, and a single crimson cloud hung poised high up against the sky. I remember watching it as it turned to purple and then to gray. A burst of singing came from the negro quarters behind the house, and in the strip of woodland by the river the noises of the night began to sound.

As the twilight deepened to darkness, my mother's voice faltered and ceased, and when I glanced at her, I saw she had fallen into a reverie, and that there was a shadow on her face. I have only to shut my eyes, and the years roll back and she is sitting there again beside me, in her white gown, simply made, and gathered at the waist with a broad blue ribbon, her slim white hands playing with the book upon her knee, her eyes gazing afar off across the water, her mouth drooping in the curve which it had never known till recently, her wealth of blue-black hair forming a halo round her head. Ah, that she were there when I open my eyes again, that I might speak to her! For the bitterest thought that ever came to me is one which troubles my rest from time to time even now: Did I love her as she deserved; was I a staff for her to lean upon in her trouble;

was I not, rather, a careless, unseeing boy, who recked nothing of the impending storm until it burst about him? I trust the tears which have wet my pillow since have gladdened her heart in heaven.

I was awakened from the doze into which I had fallen by the sound of rapid hoof-beats down the road. We listened to them in silence, as they drew near and nearer. I did not doubt it was my father, for few others ever rode our way. He had been from home all day, as he frequently was of late, only he did not usually return so early in the evening. Something in my mother's face as she strained her eyes into the shadows to catch a glimpse of the advancing horseman drew me from my chair and to her side.

"It is your father," she said, in a voice almost inaudible, and as she spoke, the rider leaped from the shadow of the trees. He drew his horse up before the porch with a jerk and threw himself from the saddle. As he came up the steps, I saw that his face was strangely flushed and his eyes gleaming in a way that made me shiver. I felt my mother's arm about me trembling as she drew me closer to her.

"Well, it 's over," he said, flinging himself down upon the upper step, "and damme if I 'm sorry. Anything 's better than living here in the woods like a lump on a log."

"What do you mean is over, Tom?" asked my mother very quietly.

"I mean our possession of this place is over.

Since an hour ago, it has belonged to Squire Blakesley, across the river."

"You mean you have gambled it away?"

"If you choose to call it that," said my father ungraciously, and he turned his back to us and gazed gloomily out over the water.

For a moment there was silence.

"Since we no longer possess this place," said my mother at last, "I suppose you intend to forget your foolish anger against your father, and claim your patrimony?"

"Foolish or not," he cried, "I have sworn never to take it until it is offered to me, and I mean to keep my word!"

"You would make your boy a beggar to gratify a foolish whim!" retorted my mother, her voice trembling with passion. I had never seen her so, and even my father glanced at her furtively in some astonishment. "Very well. In that it is for you to do as you may choose, but his estate here, or what is left of it, shall be kept intact for him."

"What do you mean?" cried my father, and he sprang to his feet and slashed his boot savagely with his riding-whip.

"I mean," said my mother very quietly, "that since a gambling debt is not recoverable by law, we have only to live on quietly here and no one will dare disturb us."

"And my honor?" cried my father with an oath, the first I had ever heard him use. "It seems to me that you forget my honor, madam."

"You have been the first to forget your honor,

sir," said my mother, rising to face him, but still keeping me within her arm, "in staking your son's inheritance upon a throw of the dice."

My father started as though he had been struck across the face, but he was too far gone in anger to listen to the voice of reason. Indeed, I have always found that the more a man deserves rebuke, the less likely is he to take it quietly.

"Come here, Tom," he said to me, and when I hesitated, added in a sterner tone, "come here, sir, I say."

I had no choice but to go to him, nor did my mother seek to hold me back. He caught me by the arms and bent until his face was close to mine.

"You are to promise me two things, Tom," he said, and I perceived that his breath was heavy with the fumes of wine. "One is that you are never to claim your inheritance of Riverview until it is offered to you freely by them that now possess it. Do you promise me that?"

"Yes," I faltered. "I promise you, sir."

"Good!" he said. "And the other is that you will pay my debts of honor after I am dead, if they be not paid before. Promise me that also, Tom."

His eyes were on mine, and I could do nothing but obey, even had I thought of resisting.

"I promise that also, sir," I said.

"Very well," and he retained his grasp on my arms yet a moment. "Remember, Tom, that a gentleman never breaks his word. It is his most priceless possession, the thing which above all others makes him a gentleman."

He dropped his hands and turned away into the house. A moment later, from the refuge of my mother's arms, I heard him heavily mounting the stairs to his room on the floor above. My mother said never a word, but she covered my face with kisses, and I felt that she was crying. She held me for a time upon her lap, gazing out across the river as before, and when I raised my hand and caressed her cheek, smiled down upon me sadly. She kissed me again as she put me to bed, and the last thing I saw before drifting away into the land of dreams was her sweet face bending over me. Had I known that it was the last time I was to see it so, — the last time those tender hands were to draw the covers close about me, — I should not have closed my eyes in such content.

CHAPTER V

THE SECRET OF A HEART

LATE that night I was awakened by the slamming of doors and hurried footsteps in the hall and up and down the stairs. I sat up in bed, and as I listened intently, heard frightened whispering without my door. It rose and died away and rose again, broken by stifled sobbing, and I knew that some great disaster had befallen. It seemed, somehow, natural that this should happen, after my father's recent conduct. With a cold fear at my heart, I threw the covers back, slid from the bed, and groped my way across the room. As I fumbled at the latch, the whispering and sobbing came suddenly to an end, as though those without had stopped with bated breath. At last I got the door open, and looking out, saw half a dozen negro servants grouped upon the landing. One of them held a lantern, which threw slender rays of light across the floor and queer shadows up against their faces. They stared at me an instant, and then, finding their breath again, burst forth in lamentation.

"What is it?" I cried. "What has happened?"

My old mammy had her arms around me and

caught me up to her face, down which the tears were streaming.

"Oh, Lawd, keep dis chile!" she sobbed, looking down at me with infinite tenderness. "Oh, Lawd, bless an' keep dis chile!"

"But, mammy," I repeated impatiently, "what has happened?"

Her trembling lips would not permit her answering, but she pointed to the door of my father's room and her tears broke forth afresh.

"Is my mother there?" I asked.

She nodded.

"Then I will go to her," I said, and I had squirmed out of her arms and was running along the passage before she could detain me. In a moment I had reached the door, but all my courage seemed to fail me in face of the mystery within, and the knock I gave was a very feeble and timid one. I heard a quick step on the floor, and the door opened ever so little.

"Is it you, doctor?" asked my mother's voice.

"No, mother, it is only I," I said.

"You!" she cried, in a terrible voice, and I caught a glimpse of her face rigid with horror before she slammed the door. The sight seemed to freeze me there on the threshold, powerless to move. I have tried — ah, how often! — to put behind me the memory of her face as I saw it then, but it is before me now and again, even yet. And I began to cry, for it was the first time my mother had ever shut me from her presence.

"Are you there, Tom?" I heard her voice ask in

a moment. Her voice, did I say? Nay, not hers, but a voice I had never heard before, — the voice of a woman suffocating with anguish.

"Yes, mother," I answered, "I am here."

"And you love me, do you not, Tom?"

"Oh, yes, mother!" I cried; and I thank God to this day that there was so much of genuine feeling in my voice.

"Then if you love me, Tom," she said, "you will go back to your room and not come near this door again. Promise me, Tom, that you will do as I ask you."

"I promise, mother," I answered. "But what has happened? Is father dead?"

"Mr. Fontaine will be here soon," she said, "and will explain it all to you. Now run back to your room, dearest, and go to bed."

"Yes, mother," I said again, but as I turned to go, I heard a sound which struck me motionless. No, my father was not dead, for that was his voice I heard, pitched far above its usual key.

"I shall never go back," he cried. "I shall never go back till he asks me."

I felt the perspiration start from my forehead.

"Have you gone, Tom?" asked my mother's voice.

"I am just going, mother," I sobbed, and tore myself away from the door. My mammy's arms were about me again as I turned, and carried me back to my room. This time I did not resist, but as she sat down, still holding me, I laid my head upon her breast and sobbed myself to sleep. When

I awoke, I found that I was in bed with the covers tucked close around me, and through my window I could see the gray dawn breaking. I lay and watched the light grow along the horizon and up into the heavens. And while I lay thus, with heart aching dully, the door of my room opened softly, and with joy inexpressible I saw that it was my beloved friend who entered.

"Oh, Mr. Fontaine!" I cried, and stretched out my arms to him. He took me up as a mother might, and held me close against his heart.

"Do you remember, dear," he said, and his voice was trembling, "what you told me one day by the river — that you meant to be brave under trial?"

I sobbed assent.

"Well, the trial has come, Tom, and I want you to be brave and strong. You are not going to disappoint me, are you?"

Oh, it was hard, and I was only a child, but I sat upright on his knee and tried to dry my tears.

"I will try," I said, but the sobs would come in spite of me.

"That is right," and he was stroking my hair in that old familiar, tender way. "Your father is very ill, Tom."

Well, if that was all, I could bear it, certainly.

"But he will get well," I said.

He was looking far out at the purple sky, and his face seemed old and gray.

"I hope and pray so," he said at last. "He has the smallpox, Tom. There are some cases along the river near Charles City, and he must

have caught it there. Doctor Brayle has done everything for him that can be done."

But I was not listening. There was room for only one thought in my brain.

"And my mother is with him!" I cried, and my heart seemed bursting.

He held me tight against him, and I felt a tear fall upon my head. This was the trial, then — for him no less than me.

"Yes, she is with him, Tom. She believes it her duty, and will allow no one else to enter. Ah, she has not been found wanting. Dear heart, I knew she would never be."

Of what came after, I have no distinct remembrance. Mr. Fontaine told me that my mother wished me to go home with him, so that I might be quite beyond reach of the infection. He had agreed that this would be the wisest course, and so, too stricken at heart to resist, I was bundled into his chaise with a chest of my clothes, and driven away through the crowd of sobbing negroes to the little house at Charles City where he and his sister lived.

The week that followed dwells in my memory as some tremendous nightmare, lightened here and there by the unvarying kindness of my friend and of his sister. I wandered along the river and gazed out across the changing water for hours at a time, with eyes that saw nothing of what was before them. Often I remained thus until some one came for me and led me gently back into the house. My brain seemed numbed, and no longer capable of

thought. Mr. Fontaine took charge of our affairs, doing everything that could be done, keeping the frightened negroes to their work, and praying with my mother through the tight-closed door. He had no fear, and would have entered and prayed with her beside the bed, had she permitted.

I was sitting by the river-bank one evening, watching the shadows lengthen across the water, when I heard a step behind me, and turned to see my friend approaching. A glance at his face brought me to my feet.

"What is it?" I cried, and ran to him.

He took my hands in his.

"Your father died an hour ago, Tom," he said, and smoothed my hair in the familiar way which seemed to comfort him as well as me.

"And my mother?" I asked, for it was of her I was thinking.

"Your mother is ill, too," he said, and placed his arms about me and held me close, "but with God's grace we will save her life."

But I had started from him.

"If she is ill," I cried, "I must go to her. She will want me."

He shook his head, still holding to my hands.

"No, she does not want you, Tom," he said. "The one thing that will make her happy is the thought that you are quite removed from danger. I believed my place was at her bedside, but she would not permit it."

And then he told me, with glistening eyes, that my old mammy, who had been my mother's thirty

years before, was nursing her and would not be sent away. She had burst in the door of the plague chamber the moment she had heard that her mistress was ill, and dared any one disturb her. Old Doctor Brayle had commanded that she be given her will, and declared that in this old negro woman's careful nursing lay my mother's great chance of life.

The scalding tears poured down my cheeks as Mr. Fontaine told me this, — the first, I think, that I had shed that week, for after that dreadful night, my sorrow had been of a dry and bitter kind, — and a stinging remorse seized me as I thought of the times I had been cross and disobedient to mammy. Ah, how I loved her now! It was the accustomed irony of my life that I was never to tell her so.

Ere daylight the next morning I was seated beside my friend as he drove me home. The river was cloaked in mist, and the dawn seemed inexpressibly dreary. As we approached the house, I wondered to see how forlorn and neglected it appeared. A crowd of wailing negroes surrounded the chaise when we stopped, and I would have got out, but Mr. Fontaine held me firmly in my seat.

"We must remain here," he said, and I dropped back beside him, and waited in a kind of stupor.

Presently they brought the coffin down, the negroes who carried it wreathing themselves in tobacco smoke, and placed it in a cart. We fol-

lowed at a distance as it rolled slowly toward the Wyeth burying-ground in the grove of willows near the road. The thought came to me that my father should lie with the Stewarts, not with the Wyeths, and then suddenly a great sickness and faintness came upon me, and I remember nothing of what followed until I found Miss Fontaine lifting me from the chaise at the door. I was put to bed, and not until the next day was I able to crawl forth again.

Then came days of anguish and suspense, days spent by me roaming the woods, or lying face downward beneath the trees, and praying that God would spare my mother's life. Bulletins were brought me from her bedside, — she was better, she was worse, she was better, — how shall I tell the rest? — until at last one day came my dear friend, his lips quivering, the tears streaming down his face unrestrained, and told me that she was dead. I think the sight of his great sorrow frightened me, and I bore the blow with greater composure than I had thought possible. Had she sent me no message? Yes, she had sent me a message, — her last thought had been of me. She asked me to be a good boy and an honest man, to follow the counsel of Mr. Fontaine in all things, and to keep my promise to my father. So, even in death her love for him and for the honor of his memory triumphed, as I would have had it do.

Again there was a dismal procession through the gray morning to the willow grove, where we stood beneath the dripping branches, while afar

off the rude coffin was lowered to its last resting-place. The negroes grouped themselves about, and my friend stood at my side, his head bare, his face raised to heaven, as though he saw her there.

"'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.'"

I felt the threads of my life slipping from me one by one, even as the trees faded from before my eyes. Only that strong, exultant voice at my side went on and on.

"'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.'" On and on went the voice; there was nothing else in the whole wide world but that voice crying out over my mother's grave. "'I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.'" And then the voice faltered and broke. "She was the light of my life and the joy of my heart," it was no longer the ritual of the church; "and yet had I to walk beside her and tell her naught. And now is she taken from me, for the Lord hath received her to His bosom to live in the light of His love forevermore."

I looked up into his face and saw the secret of his heart revealed, — the secret he had kept so well, but which his anguish had wrung from him. It was only for an instant, yet I think he knew I had read his heart — I, alone of all the world, understood. Had my mother known, I wonder?

Yes, I think she had, and in the greatness of his love found help and comfort. Good man and lovely woman, God rest and keep you both.

I went home with him, remembering with a pang that the place I had called home was mine no longer. Those among my friends who know the history of my boyhood understand to some extent my loathing for the cards and dice. It is perhaps unreasonable, — I might be the first to deem it so in any other man, — but when I count up the woe they brought my mother, — father and husband slaves to the same frenzy, — how they wrecked her life and embittered it, my passion rises in my throat to choke me. Never did I hate them more than in the days which followed; for they had made me outcast, and what the future held for me, I could not guess. The question was answered of a sudden a week later, when there came from my grandfather a curt note bidding me be sent to Riverview. It was decided at once that I must go. I myself looked forward to the change with a boy's blind longing for adventure, and said farewell to the man who had been so much to me with a willingness I wince to think upon.

CHAPTER VI

I AM TREATED TO A SURPRISE

THE rain was falling dismally as the coach in which I had made the journey rolled up the drive to Riverview, and I caught but a glimpse of the house as I was rushed up the steps and into the wide hall. A lady dressed in a loose green gown was seated in an easy-chair before the open fire, and she did not rise as I entered, doubtless because her lap was full of knitting.

"Gracious, how wet the child is!" she cried, looking me over critically. "Take him to his room, Sally, and see that he has a bath and change of clothing. I'm sure he needs both."

I turned away without a word and followed the negro maid. Of course the lady thought me a surly boor, but my heart was burning, for I had hoped for a different welcome. As I passed along the hall and up the broad staircase, the thought came to me that all of this would one day be mine, should I choose to claim it, and then, with crimson cheeks, I put the thought from me, as unworthy of my mother's son.

But my room looked very warm and cheerful even on this chilly day, and from the window I could see broad fields of new-planted tobacco, and beyond

them the yellow road and then the river. I stood long looking out at it and wondering what my life here had in store. Half an hour later, word came from my grandfather that he wished to see me, and the same maid led me down the stairs and to his study, I stumbling along beside her with a madly beating heart. As I crossed the lower hall, I heard a burst of childish laughter, and saw a boy and girl, both younger than myself, playing near the chair where the lady sat. I looked at them with interest, but the sight of me seemed to freeze the laughter on their faces, and they gazed with staring eyes until I turned the corner and was out of sight. But I had little time to wonder at this astonishing behavior, for in a moment I was in my grandfather's office.

He was seated at a great table, and had apparently been going over some accounts, for the board in front of him was littered with books and papers. I saw, even beneath the disguise of his red face and white hair, his strong resemblance to my father, and my heart went out to him on the instant. For I had loved my father, despite the wild behavior which marred his later days. Indeed, I always think of him during that time as suffering with a grievous malady, of which he could not rid himself, and which ate his heart out all the faster because he saw how great was the anguish it caused the woman he loved. That it was some such disease I am quite certain, so different was his naturally strong and sunny disposition.

My grandfather gazed at me some moments without speaking, as I stood there, longing to throw myself into his arms, and all the misery of the years that followed might never have been, had I buried my pride and followed the dictates of my heart. But I waited for him to speak, and the moment passed.

"So this is Tom's boy," he said at last. "My God, how like he is!"

He fell silent for a moment, — silenced, no doubt, by bitter memories.

"You wonder, perhaps," he said in a sterner tone, "why I have sent for you; but I could do no less. The letter from your pastor which announced the deaths of your father and your mother brought me the tidings also that your mother's fortune had been diced away down to the last penny, and that even the negroes must be sold to satisfy the claims against it. However undutiful your father may have been, I could not permit his son to become a charge upon the poor funds."

I felt my cheeks flushing, but I judged it best to choke back the words which trembled on my lips.

"I can read your thought," said my grandfather quickly. "You are thinking that the heir of Riverview could hardly be called a pauper. Do not forget that your father forfeited his claim to the estate by his ungentlemanly conduct."

"I shall not forget it," I burst out. "My father made sure that I should never forget it. I shall never claim the estate. And my father's conduct was never ungentlemanly."

"As you will," said my grandfather scornfully. "I am not apt at mincing words. I told him one thing many years ago which I should have thought he would remember, and which I now repeat to you. I told him that a gentleman ceased to be a gentleman when once he gambled beyond his means."

I waited to hear no more, but with crimson cheeks and head in air, I turned on my heel and started for the door.

"Damn my stars, sir!" he roared. "Wait to hear me out."

But I would not wait. After a moment's struggle with the latch, I had the door open and marched straight to my room. Once inside, I bolted the door, and throwing myself on the floor, sobbed myself to sleep.

What need to detail further? There were a hundred such scenes between us in the four years that followed, and as I look back upon them now, I realize that through it all I, too, showed my full share of Stewart obstinacy and temper. I more than suspect that my grandfather in his most violent outbursts was inwardly trembling with tenderness for me, as was I for him, and that a single gentle word, spoken at the right time, would have brought us into each other's arms. And I realize too late that it was for me, and not for him, to speak that word. It was only when I saw him lying in his bed, stricken with paralysis, bereft of the power of speech or movement, that I knew how great my love for him had been. His eyes, as

they met mine on that last day, had in them infinite tenderness and pleading, and my heart melted as I bent and kissed his lips. He struggled to speak, and the sweat broke from his forehead at the effort, but what he would have said I can only guess, for he died that night, without the iron bands which held him fast loosening for an instant. Yet I love to fancy that his last words, could he have spoken them, would have been words of love and forgiveness, for my father as well as for myself, and such, I am sure, they would have been. With him there passed away the only one at Riverview whom I had grown to love.

And now a word about the others among whom I passed the second period of my boyhood. My father's younger brother, James, had married seven or eight years before a lady whose estate adjoined Riverview, — Mrs. Constance Randolph, a widow some years older than himself. She had one child living, a daughter, Dorothy, who, at the time I came to Riverview, was a girl of nine, and a year after her second marriage she bore a son, who was named James, much against the wishes of his mother. She would have called him Thomas, a name which had for five generations been that of the head of the house. But this my grandfather would by no means allow, and so the child was christened after his father. I think that ever since the day she had entered the Stewart family, my aunt had thought me a spectre across her path, for she was an ambitious woman and wished the whole estate for her son, — in which I do not greatly

blame her. But she had brooded over her fear until it had become a phantom which haunted her unceasingly, and she had come to deem me a kind of monster, who stood between her boy and his inheritance. Her second husband died three years after their marriage, — he was drowned one day in January while crossing the river on the ice, which gave way under him, — and after that she became the mistress of Riverview in earnest, ruling my grandfather with a rod of iron, for though bold enough with men, and especially with the men of his own family, he would succumb in a moment to a woman's shrewish temper.

Only twice had he revolted against her rule. The first time was when she had announced her intention of naming her boy Thomas, as I have already mentioned. The second was when he decided to summon me to Riverview. This she had opposed with all her might, but he had persisted, and finally ended the argument by putting her from the room, — doubtless with great inward trepidation. So I came to be a phantom in the flesh, and do not wonder that she hated me, so sour will the human heart become which broods forever on its selfishness. Her children she kept from me as from the plague, and during the years preceding my grandfather's death, I had almost no communication with them. He required, however, that every respect be shown me, placed me on his right at table, — how often have I looked up from my plate to find his eyes upon me, — selected half a dozen negroes to be my especial servants,

engaged the Rev. James Scott, pastor of the Quantico church, as my tutor, and even ordered for me an elaborate wardrobe from his factor in London.

Mr. Scott was a man of parts, and under him I gained some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and mathematics. Certainly I made more progress than I should have done under different circumstances, for finding myself without companions or other occupation, I applied myself to my books for want of something better. My grandfather possessed above a hundred volumes, and when he saw how my bent lay, he ordered others for me, so that his library came to be one of the largest on the Northern Neck, though but indifferently selected. Absorbed in these books, I managed to forget the disorder of my circumstances.

The remainder of my time I spent in riding along the river road on the mare my grandfather had given me, or wandering over the estate and in and out among the negro cabins. To the negroes I was always "Mas' Tom," and I am proud to remember that I made many friends among them, treating them always with justice and sometimes with mercy, as, indeed, I try yet to do. Once I came suddenly upon old Gump, the major-domo of the house servants, preparing to give a little pickaninny a thrashing, and I stopped to ask what he had done.

"He 's done been stealin', Mas' Tom," answered Gump. "Ain' goin' t' hab no t'iefs roun' dis yere house, not if I knows it."

"What did he steal, uncle?" I asked.

"Dis yere whip," said Gump, and he held up an old riding-whip of mine.

I looked at it and hesitated for a moment. Was it worth beating a child for? The little beady eyes were gazing at me in an agony of supplication.

"Gump," I said, "don't beat him. That's all right. I want him to have the whip."

Gump stared at me in astonishment.

"What, Mas' Tom," he exclaimed, "you mean dat you gib him de whip?"

"Yes," I said, "I give him the whip, Gump," and luckily the old man could not distinguish between the past and present tenses of the verb, so that I was spared a lie. The little thief ran away with the whip in his hand, and it was long before the incident was recalled to me.

So I returned again to my books, and to the silent but no less active antagonism toward my aunt. Yet, I would not paint her treatment of me in too gloomy colors. Doubtless I gave her much just cause for offense, for I had grown into a surly and quick-tempered boy, with raw places ever open to her touch. That she loved her children I know well, and her love for them was at the bottom of her dislike for me. I have learned long since that there is no heart wholly bad and selfish.

While my grandfather yet lived, I think she had some hope that something would happen to make me an outcast utterly, but after his death this hope vanished, and she sent for me one morning to come to her. I found her seated in the

selfsame chair in which I had first seen him, and the table was still littered with papers and accounts.

"Good-morning, Thomas," she said politely enough, as I entered, and, as I returned her greeting, motioned me to a chair. She seemed to hesitate at a beginning, and in the moment of silence that followed, I saw that her face was growing thinner, and that her hair was streaked with gray.

"I have sent for you, Thomas," she said at last, "to find out what your intention is with regard to this estate. You know, of course, that your father forfeited it voluntarily, and that you have no moral claim to it. Still, the law might sustain your claim, should you choose to assert it."

"I shall not choose to assert it," I answered coldly, and as I spoke, her face was suffused with sudden joy. "I promised my father never to claim it,—never to take it unless it were offered to me openly and freely, — and I intend to keep my promise."

For a moment her emotion prevented her replying, and she pressed one hand against her breast as though to still the beating of her heart.

"Very well," she said at last. "Your resolution does credit to your honor, and I will see that you do not regret it. I will undertake the management of both estates until my son becomes of age. You shall have an ample allowance. Let me see; how old are you?"

"I am fifteen years old," I answered.

"And have about sounded the depths of Master

Scott's learning, I suppose?" she asked, smiling, the first smile, I think, she had ever given me.

"He was saying only yesterday that I should soon have to seek another tutor."

"'T is as I thought. Well, what say you to a course at William and Mary?"

She smiled again as she saw how my cheeks flushed.

"I should like it above all things," I answered earnestly, and, indeed, I had often thought of it with longing, so lonely was my life at Riverview.

"It shall be done," she said. "The year opens in a fortnight's time, and you must be there at the beginning."

I thanked her and left the room, and ran to my tutor, who had arrived some time before, to acquaint him with my good fortune. He was no less pleased than I, and forthwith wrote me a letter to Dr. Thomas Dawson, president of the college, commending me to his good offices. So, in due course, I rode away from Riverview, not regretting it, nor, I dare say, regretted. In truth, I had no reason to love the place, nor had any within it reason to love me.

Of my life at college, little need be said. Indeed, I have small reason to be proud of it, for, reacting against earlier years, perhaps, I cultivated the Apollo room at the Raleigh rather than my books, and toasted the leaden bust of Sir Walter more times than I care to remember. Yet I never forgot that I was a gentleman, thank God! And previous years of study brought me through with

some little honor despite my present carelessness. I had a liberal allowance, and elected to spend my vacations at Williamsburg or at Norfolk, or coasting up the Chesapeake as far as Baltimore, and did not once return to Riverview, where I knew I should get cold welcome. In fact, I was left to do pretty much as I pleased, my aunt being greatly occupied with the care of the estate, and doubtless happy to be rid of me so easily. So I entered my eighteenth year, and the time of my graduation was at hand. And it was then that the great event happened which changed my whole life by giving me something to live for.

It was the custom for the first class, the year of its graduation, to attend the second of the grand assemblies given by the governor while the House of Burgesses was in session, and we had been looking forward to the event with no small anticipation. Many of us, myself among the number, had ordered suits from London for the occasion, and I thought that I looked uncommon well as I arrayed myself that night before the glass. Such is the vanity of youth, for I have since been assured many times by one who saw me that I was a very ordinary looking fellow. Half a dozen of us, the better to gather courage, went down Duke of Gloucester Street arm in arm toward the governor's palace with its great lanthorn alight to honor the occasion, and mounted the steps together, — our trifling over our toilets had made us late, — and as we entered the high doorway, did our best to look as though a great assembly was an every-day event to us. A

moment later, I saw a sight which took my breath away.

It was only a girl of seventeen — but such a girl! Can I describe her as I close my eyes and see her again before me? No, I cannot trust my pen, nor would any such description do her justice; for her charm lay not in beauty only, but in a certain rare, sweet girlishness, which seemed to form a nimbus round her. Yet was her beauty worth remarking, too; and I have loved to think that, while others saw that only, I, looking with more perceptive eyes, saw more truly to her heart. I did not reason all this out at the first; I only stood and stared at her amazed, until some one knocking against me brought me to my senses. There were a dozen men about her, and one of these I saw with delight was Dr. Price, our registrar at the college, a benign old man, who could deny me nothing. I waited with scarce concealed impatience until he turned away from the group, and then I was at his side in an instant.

"Dr. Price," I whispered eagerly, "will you do me the favor of presenting me to that young lady?"

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed, looking at me over his glasses in astonishment, "you seem quite excited. Which young lady?"

"The one you have just left," I answered breathlessly.

He looked at me quizzically for a moment, and laughed to himself as though I had uttered a joke.

"Why, certainly," he said. "Come with me."

I could have kissed his hand in my gratitude, as he turned back toward the group. I followed a pace behind, and felt that my hands were trembling. The group opened a little as we approached, and in a moment we were before her.

"Miss Randolph," said Dr. Price, "here is a young gentleman who has just begged of me the favor of an introduction. Permit me to present Mr. Thomas Stewart."

"Why, 'pon my word," cried that young lady, "'t is cousin Tom!" and as I stood gaping at her like a fool, in helpless bewilderment, she came to me and gave me her hand with the prettiest grace in the world.

CHAPTER VII

I DECIDE TO BE A SOLDIER

Now who would have thought that in three short years the red-cheeked girl whom I had left at Riverview, and of whom I had never thought twice, could have grown into this brown-eyed fairy? Certainly not I, and my hopeless astonishment must have been quite apparent, for Mistress Dorothy laughed merrily as she looked at me.

"Come, cousin," she cried, "you look as though you saw a ghost. I assure you I am not a ghost, but very substantial flesh and blood."

"'T was not of a ghost I was thinking," I said, recovering my wits a little under the magic of her voice, which I thought the sweetest I had ever heard, "but of the three Graces, and methought I saw a fourth."

She gazed at me a moment with bright, intent eyes, the faintest touch of color in her cheek. Then she smiled — a smile that brought two tiny dimples into being — oh, such a smile! But there — why weary you with telling what I felt? You have all felt very like it when you gazed into a certain pair of eyes, — or if you have not, you will some day, — and if you never do, why, God pity you!

She laid her hand on my arm and turned to the group about us. "Gentlemen," she said, with a little curtsy, "I know you will excuse us. My cousin Tom and I have not seen each other these three years, and have a hundred things to say;" and so I walked off with her, my head in the air, and my heart beating madly, the proudest man in the colony, I dare say, and with as good cause, too, as any.

Dorothy led the way, for I was too blinded with joy to see where I was going, and with a directness which showed acquaintance with the great house, proceeded to a corner under the stair which had a bit of tapestry before it that quite shut us out from interruption. She sat down opposite me, and I pinched my arm to make sure I was not dreaming.

"Why, Tom," she cried, with a little laugh, as she saw me wince at the pain, "you surely do not think yourself asleep?"

"I know not whether 't is dreaming or enchantment," said I; "but sleep or sorcery, 't is very pleasant and I trust will never end."

"What is it that you think enchantment, Tom?" she asked.

"What could it be but you?" I retorted, and she smiled the slyest little smile in the world. "I swear that when I entered that door ten minutes since, I was wide awake as any man, but the moment I clapt eyes on you, I lost all sense of my surroundings, and have since trod on air."

"Oh, what do you think it can be?" she questioned, pretending to look mightily concerned. "Do you think it is the fever, Tom?"

But I was far past teasing.

"To think that you should be Dorothy!" I said. "I may call you Dorothy, may I not?"

"Why, of course you may!" she cried. "Are we not cousins, Tom?"

What a thrill it gave me to hear her call me Tom! Of course we were not cousins, but I fancy all the tortures of the Inquisition could not at that moment have made me deny the relationship. Well, we talked and talked. Of what I said, I have not the slightest remembrance, — it was all foolish enough, no doubt, — but Dorothy told me how her mother had been managing the estate, greatly assisted by the advice of a Major Washington, living ten miles up the river at Mount Vernon; how her brother James had been tutored by my old preceptor, but showed far greater liking for his horse and cocks than for his books; and how Mr. Washington had come to Riverview a month before to propose that Mistress Dorothy accompany him and his mother and sister to Williamsburg, and how her mother had consented, and the flurry there was to get her ready, and how she finally was got ready, and started, and reached Williamsburg, and had been with the Washingtons for a week, and had attended the first assembly, which accounted for her knowing the house so well, and had had a splendid time.

"And who was it you sat with here last time, Dorothy?" I asked, for I could not bear that she should connect this place with any one but me.

"Let me see," and the sly minx seemed to hesi-

tate in the effort at recollection. "Was it Mr. Burke? No, I was with him on the veranda. Was it Mr. Forsythe? No. Ah, I have it!" and she paused a moment to prolong my agony. "It was with Betty Washington; she had something to tell me which must be told at once, and which was very private. But what a great goose you are, to be sure. Do you know, Tom, I had no idea that melancholy boy I saw sometimes at Riverview would grow into such a — such a" —

"Such a what, Dorothy?" I asked, as she hesitated.

"Such a big, overgrown fellow, with all his heart in his face. What a monstrous fine suit that is you have on, Tom!"

The jade was laughing at me, and here was I, who was a year her senior and twice her size, sitting like an idiot, red to the ears. In faith, the larger a man is, the more the women seem tempted to torment him; but on me she presently took pity, and as the fiddles tuned up in the great ballroom, she led the way thither and permitted me to tread a minuet with her. Of course there were a score of others eager to share her dances, but she was more kind to me than I deserved, and in particular, when the fiddles struck up "High Betty Martin," threw herself upon my arm and laughed up into my face in the sheer joy of living. But between the dances I had great opportunity of being jealous, and spent the time moping in a corner, where, as I reviewed her talk, the frequency of her mention of Mr. Washington occurred to me, and

at the end of five minutes I had conceived a desperate jealousy of him.

"How old is this Mr. Washington?" I asked, when I had managed to get by her side again.

"Not yet twenty-two," she answered, and then as she saw my gloomy face, she burst into a peal of laughter. "He is adorable," she continued, when she had regained her breath. "Not handsome, perhaps, but so courtly, so dignified, so distinguished. I can't imagine why he is not here to-night, for he is very fond of dancing. Do you know, I fancy Governor Dinwiddie has selected him for some signal service, for it was at his invitation that Mr. Washington came to Williamsburg. He is just the kind of man one would fix upon instinctively to do anything that was very dangerous or very difficult."

"I dare say," I muttered, biting my lips with vexation, and avoiding Dorothy's laughing eyes. I was a mere puppy, or I should have known that a woman never praises openly the man she loves.

"I am sure you will admire him when you meet him," she continued, "as I am determined you shall do this very night. He is a neighbor, you know, and I'll wager that when you come to live at Riverview, you will be forever riding over to Mount Vernon."

"Oh, doubtless!" I said, between my teeth, and I longed to have Mr. Washington by the throat. "How comes it I heard nothing of him when I was at Riverview?"

"'T is only since last year he has been there,"

she answered. "The estate belonged to his elder brother, Lawrence, who died July a year ago, and Major Washington has since then been with his mother, helping her in its management. Before that time, he had been over the mountains surveying all that western country, and then to the West Indies, where he had the smallpox, because he would not break a promise to dine with a family where it was. But what is the matter? You seem quite ill."

"It is nothing," I said, after a moment. "It was the smallpox which killed my father and my mother."

"Pardon me," and her hand was on mine for an instant. Indeed, the shudder which always shook me whenever I heard that dread infection mentioned had already passed. "He has the rank of major," she continued, hoping doubtless to distract my thoughts, "because he has been appointed adjutant-general of one of the districts, but somehow we rarely call him major, for he says he does not want the title until he has done something to deserve it."

"He seems a very extraordinary man," I said gloomily, "to have done so much and to be yet scarce twenty-two."

"He is an extraordinary man," cried Dorothy, "as you will say when you meet him. A word of caution, Tom," she added, seeing my desperate plight, and relenting a little. "Say nothing to him of the tender passion, for he has lately been crossed in love, and is very sore about it. A cer-

tain Mistress Cary, to whom he was paying court, hath rejected him, and wounded him as much in his self-esteem as in his love, which, I fancy, was not great, but which, on that account, he is anxious to have appear even greater, as is the way with men."

"Trust me," said I, with a great lightening of the heart; "I shall be very careful not to wound him, Dorothy."

"Pray, why dost thou smile so, Tom?" she asked, her eyes agleam. "Is it that there is a pair of bright eyes here in Williamsburg which you are dying to talk about? Well, I will be your confidante."

"Oh, Dorothy!" I stammered, but my tongue refused to utter the thought which was in my heart,—that there was only one pair of eyes in the whole world I cared for, and that I was looking into them at this very moment.

"Ah, you blush, you stammer!" cried my tormentor. "Come, I'll wager there's a pretty maid. Tell me her name, Tom."

I looked at her and gripped my hands at my side. If only this crowd was not about us — if only we were alone together somewhere — I would be bold enough.

"And why do you look so savage, Tom?" she asked, and I could have sworn she had read my thought. "You are not angry with me already! Why, you have known me scarce an hour!"

I could endure no more, and I reached out after her, heedless of the time and of the place.

Doubtless there would have been great scandal among the stately dames who surrounded us, but that she sprang away from me with a little laugh and ran plump into a man who had been hastening toward her. The sight of her in the arms of a stranger brought me to my senses, and I stopped dead where I was.

"'T is Mr. Washington!" she cried, looking up into his face, and as he set her gently on her feet, she held out her hand to him. He raised it to his lips with a courtly grace I greatly envied. "Mr. Washington, this is my cousin, Thomas Stewart."

"I am very happy to meet Mr. Stewart," he said, and he grasped my hand with a heartiness which warmed my heart. I had to look up to meet his eyes, for he must have been an inch or two better than six feet in height, and of a most commanding presence. His eyes were blue-gray, penetrating, and overhung by a heavy brow, his face long rather than broad, with high, round cheek-bones and a large mouth, which could smile most agreeably, or — as I was afterward to learn — close in a firm, straight line with dogged resolution. At this moment his face was luminous with joy, and he was plainly laboring under some intense emotion.

"Where is my mother, Dolly?" he asked. "I have news for her."

"She is in the reception hall with the governor's wife," she answered. "But may we not have your news, Mr. Washington?"

He paused and looked back at her a moment.

"'T is all settled," he said, "and I am to start at once."

"I was right, then!" she cried, her eyes sparkling in sympathy with his. "I was just telling cousin Tom I believed the governor had a mission for you."

"Well, so he has, and I got my papers not ten minutes since. You could never guess my destination."

"Boston? New York? London?" she questioned, but he shook his head at each, smiling ever more broadly.

"No, 't is none of those. 'T is Venango."

"Venango?" cried Dorothy. "Where, in heaven's name, may that be?" Nor was I any the less at a loss.

"'T is a French outpost in the Ohio country," answered Washington, "and my mission, in brief, is to warn the French off English territory."

Dorothy gazed at him, eyes wide with amazement. There was something in the speaker's words and look which fired my blood.

"You will need companions, will you not, Major Washington?" I asked.

He smiled in comprehension, as he met my eyes.

"Only two or three, Mr. Stewart. Two or three guides and a few Indians will be all."

My disappointment must have shown in my face, for he gave me his hand again.

"I thank you for your offer, Mr. Stewart," he said earnestly. "Believe me, if it were possible, I should ask no better companion. But do not

despair. I have little hope the French will heed the warning, and 't will then be a question of arms. In such event, there will be great need of brave and loyal men, and you will have good opportunity to see the country beyond the mountains. But I must find my mother, and tell her of my great good fortune."

I watched him as he strode away, and I fancy there was a new light in my eyes, — certainly there was a new purpose in my heart. For I had been often sadly puzzled as to what I should do when once I was out of college. I had no mind to become an idler at Riverview, but was determined to win myself a place in the world. Yet when I came to look about me, I saw small prospect of success. The professions — the law, medicine, and even the church — were overrun with vagabonds who had brought them so low that no gentleman could think of earning a livelihood — much less a place in the world — by them. Trade was equally out of the question, for there was little trade in the colony, and that in the hands of sharpers. But Mr. Washington's words had opened a new vista. What possibilities lay in the profession of arms! And my resolution was taken in an instant, — I would be a soldier. I said nothing of my resolve to Dorothy, fearing that she would laugh at me, as she doubtless would have done, and the remainder of the evening passed very quickly. Dorothy presented me to Mrs. Washington, a stately and beautiful lady, who spoke of her son with evident love and pride. He had been called away, she said, for he had much to do, and

thus reminded, I remembered that it was time for me also to depart. Before I went, I obtained permission from Mrs. Washington to call and see her next day, — Dorothy standing by with eyes demurely downcast, as though she did not know it was she and she only whom I hoped to see.

"I am very sorry I teased you, cousin Tom," she said very softly, as I turned to her to say good-night. "Your eagerness to go with Mr. Washington pleased me mightily. It is just what I should have done if I were a man. Good-night," and before I could find my tongue, she was again at Mrs. Washington's side.

I made my way back to my room at the college, and went to bed, but it seemed to me that the night, albeit already far spent, would never pass. Sleep was out of the question, and I tossed from side to side, thinking now of Dorothy, now of my new friend and his perilous expedition over the Alleghanies, now of my late resolve. It was in no wise weakened in the morning, as so many resolves of youth are like to be, and so soon as I had dressed and breakfasted, I sought out the best master of fence in the place, — a man whose skill had won him much renown, and who for three or four years past, finding life on the continent grown very unhealthy, had been imparting such of it as he could to the Virginia gentry, — and insisted that he give me a lesson straightway.

He gave me a half hour's practice, for the most part in quarte and tierce, — my A B C's, as it were, — and the ease with which he held me off and

bent his foil against my breast at pleasure chafed me greatly, and showed me how much I had yet to learn, besides making me somewhat less vain of my size and strength. For my antagonist was but a small man, and yet held me at a distance with consummate ease, and twisted my foil from my hand with a mere turn of his wrist. Still, he had the grace to commend me when the bout was ended, and I at once arranged to take two lessons daily while I remained in Williamsburg.

It was ten o'clock when I turned my steps toward the house where the Washingtons were stopping, and, with much inward trepidation, walked up to the door and knocked. In a moment I was in the presence of the ladies, Mrs. Washington receiving me very kindly, and Dorothy looking doubly adorable in her simple morning frock. But I was ill at ease, and the sound of voices in an adjoining room increased my restlessness.

"Do you not see what it is, madam?" cried Dorothy, at last. "He has no wish for the society of women this morning. He has gone mad like the rest of them. He is dying to talk of war and the French and expeditions over the mountains, as Mr. Washington and his friends are doing. Is it not so, sir?"

"Indeed, I cannot deny it," I said, with a very red face. "I am immensely interested in Major Washington's expedition."

Mrs. Washington smiled kindly and bade Dorothy take me to the gentlemen, which she did with a wicked twinkle in her eye that warned me I

should yet pay dear for my effrontery. Mr. Washington and half a dozen friends were seated about the room, talking through clouds of tobacco smoke of the coming expedition. There were George Fairfax, and Colonel Nelson, and Judge Pegram, and three or four other gentlemen, to all of whom I was introduced. The host waved me to a pile of pipes and case of sweet-scented on the table, and I was soon adding my quota to the clouds which enveloped us, and listening with all my ears to what was said.

It had been agreed that the start should be made at once, the party meeting at Will's Creek, where the Ohio company had a station, and proceeding thence to Logstown, and so on to Venango, or, if necessary, to the fort on French Creek. How my cheeks burned as I thought of that journey through the wilderness and over the mountains, and how I longed to be of the party! But I soon saw how impossible this was, for Mr. Washington's companions must needs be hardened men, accustomed to the perils of the forest and acquainted with the country. A bowl of punch was brought, and after discussing this, the company separated, though not till all of them had wrung Mr. Washington's hand and wished him a quick journey. I was going with the others, when he detained me.

"I wish a word with you, Mr. Stewart," he said. "I shall have to leave for Mount Vernon at once, and make the trip as rapidly as possible, in order to prepare for this expedition. May I ask if it would be possible for you to accompany my

mother and Miss Dolly home when their visit here is ended, which will be in about a week's time?"

"Certainly," I answered warmly, "I shall be only too glad to be of service to you and to them, Mr. Washington," and I thought with tingling nerves that Dorothy and I could not fail to be thrown much together.

So it was arranged, and that afternoon he set out for Mount Vernon, whence he would go direct to Will's Creek. His mother cried a little after he was gone, so Dorothy told me, but she was proud of her boy, as she had good cause to be, and appeared before the world with smiling face. The week which followed flew by like a dream. I took my lesson with the foils morning and evening, and soon began to make some progress in the art. As much time as Dorothy would permit, I spent with her, and in one of our talks she told me that she had drawn from her mother by much questioning the story of my father's marriage and of the quarrel which followed.

"When I heard," she concluded, "how Riverview might have been yours but for that unhappy dispute," — so Mrs. Stewart had not told the whole truth, and I smiled grimly to myself, — "I saw how unjustly and harshly we had always used you, and I made up my mind to be very good to you when next we met, as some slight recompense."

"And is it for that only you are kind to me, Dorothy?" I asked. "Is it not a little for my own sake?"

"Hoity-toity," she cried, "an you try me too

far, I shall withdraw my favor altogether, sir. My cheeks burn still when I think what might have happened at the ball the other night, when you so far forgot yourself as to grab at me like a wild Indian. 'T was well I had my wits about me."

"But, indeed, Dorothy," I protested, "'t was all your fault. You had plagued me beyond endurance."

"I fear you are a very bold young man," she answered pensively, and when I would have proved the truth of her assertion, sent me packing.

So the week passed, the day came when we were to leave Williamsburg, and at six o'clock one cool October morning, the great coach of the Washingtons rolled westward down the sandy street, the maples casting long shadows across the road. And on the side where Mistress Dorothy sat, I was riding at the window.

CHAPTER VIII

A RIDE TO WILLIAMSBURG

I WAS received civilly enough at Riverview, and soon determined to remain there until Major Washington returned from the west. My aunt treated me with great consideration, doubtless because she feared to anger me, and I soon fell into the routine of the estate. My cousin James, a roystering boy of fourteen, was not yet old enough to be covetous, and he and I were soon friends. Dorothy treated me as she had always done, with a hearty sisterly affection, which gave me much uneasiness, 't was so unlike my own, and I was at some pains to point out to her that we were not cousins, nor, indeed, any relation whatsoever. In return for which she merely laughed at me.

By great good fortune, I found among the overseers on my aunt's estate a man who had been a soldier of fortune in the Old World until some escapade had driven him to seek safety in the colonies, and with my aunt's permission, I secured him to teach me what he knew of the practice of arms, a tutelage which he entered upon with fine enthusiasm. He was called Captain Paul on the plantation, — a little, wiry man, with fierce mustaches and flashing eyes, greatly feared by the negroes,

though he always treated them kindly enough, so far as I could see. He claimed to be an Englishman, — certainly he spoke the language as well as any I ever heard, — but his dark eyes and swarthy skin bespoke the Spaniard or Italian, and his quickness with the foils the French. A strain of all these bloods I think he must have had, but of his family he would tell me nothing, nor of the trouble which had brought him over-sea. But of his feats of arms he loved to speak, — and they were worth the telling. He had been with Plelo's heroic little band of Frenchmen before Dantzic, where a hundred deeds of valor were performed every day, and with Broglie before Parma, where he had witnessed the rout of the Austrians. For hours together I made him recount to me the story of his campaigns, and when he grew weary of talking and I of listening, we had a round with the rapier, or a bout with the sword on horseback, and as the weeks passed, I found I was gaining some small proficiency. He drilled me, too, in another exercise which he thought most important, that of shooting from horseback with the pistol.

"'T is an accomplishment which has saved my life a score of times," he would say, "and of more value in a charge than any swordsmanship. A man must be a swordsman to defend his honor, and a good shot with the pistol to defend his life. Accomplished in both, he is armed cap-a-pie against the world. The pistol has its rules as well as the sword. For instance, —

"'When you charge an adversary, always com-

pel him to fire first, for the one who fires first rarely hits his mark.

" 'At the instant you see him about to fire, make your horse rear. This will throw your horse before you as a shield, and if the aim is true, 't will be your horse that is hit and not yourself. The life of a horse is valuable, but that of a man is more so.

" 'If your horse has not been hit, or is not badly hurt, you have your adversary at your mercy, and can either kill him or take him prisoner, as you may choose. If he be well mounted, and well accoutred, it is usually wisest to take him prisoner.

" 'If your horse has been hit mortally, take care that in falling you get clear of him by holding your leg well out and so alighting on your feet. You can easily recover in time to pistol your adversary as he passes.

" 'Above everything, learn to aim quickly, with both eyes open, the arm slightly bent, the pistol no higher than the breast. When the arm is fully extended, the tension causes it to tremble and so destroys the aim, and the man who cannot hit the mark without sighting along the barrel is usually dead before he can pull the trigger.' "

These and many other things he told me, and that I threw myself with eagerness into the lessons I need hardly say, though I never acquired his proficiency with either pistol or rapier. For I have seen him bring down a hawk upon the wing, or throwing his finger-ring high into the air, pass his rapier neatly through it as it shot down past

him. Another trick of his do I remember, — une, deux, trois, and a turn of the wrist in flanconade, — which seldom failed to tear my sword from my hand, so quickly and irresistibly did he perform it. What his lot has been I do not know, for when the king's troops came to Virginia, he was seized with a strange restlessness and resigned from my auut's service, going I know not whither; but if he be alive, there is a place at my board and a corner of my chimney for him, where he would be more than welcome.

In the mean time, not a word had been received from Major Washington — we called him major now, deeming that he had well earned the title — since he had plunged into the wilderness at Will's Creek in mid-November, accompanied only by Christopher Gist as guide, John Davidson and Jacob Van Braam as interpreters, and four woodsmen, Barnaby Currin, John M'Quire, Henry Steward, and William Jenkins, as servants. November and December passed, and Christmas was at hand. There had been great preparation for it at Riverview, for we of Virginia loved the holiday the more because the Puritans detested it, and all the smaller gentry of the county was gathered at the house, where there were feasting and dancing and much merry-making. One incident of it do I remember most distinctly, — that having, with consummate generalship, cornered Mistress Dorothy under a sprig of mistletoe, I suddenly found myself utterly bereft of the courage to carry the matter to a conclusion, and allowed her to escape unkissed,

for which she laughed at me most unmercifully once the danger was passed, though she had feigned the utmost indignation while the assault threatened. So the holidays went and New Year's came.

It was the thirteenth of January, and in the dusk of the evening I was riding back to the house as usual after my bout with Captain Paul, when I heard far up the road behind me the beat of horse's hoofs. Instinctively I knew it was Major Washington, and I drew rein and watched the rider swinging toward me. In a moment he was at my side, and we exchanged a warm handclasp from saddle to saddle.

"I am on my way to Riverview," he said, as we again urged our horses forward. "I hope to stay there the night and start at daybreak for Williamsburg to make my report to the governor. Do you care to accompany me, Mr. Stewart?"

"Do you need to ask?" I cried. "And what was the outcome of your mission, sir?"

"There will be war," he said, and his face darkened. "It is as I foresaw. The French are impudent, and claim the land belongs to them and not to us."

Neither of us spoke again, but I confess I was far from sharing the gloom of my companion. Had I not determined to be a soldier, and how was a soldier to find employment, but in war? I looked at him narrowly as we rode, and saw that he was thinner than when he had left us, and that his face was browned by much exposure.

Right heartily was he welcomed to Riverview,

and when dinner had been served and ended, nothing would do but that he should sit down among us and tell us the story of his mission. He could scarce have failed to draw inspiration from such an audience, for Dorothy's eyes were sparkling, and I was fairly trembling with excitement. Would that I could tell the story as he told it, but that were impossible.

He and his little party had gone from Will's Creek to the forks of the Ohio, through the untrodden wilderness and across swollen streams, struggling on over the threatening mountains and fighting their way through the gloomy and unbroken forest, and thence down the river to the Indian village of Logstown. There he had parleyed with the Indians for near a week before he could persuade the Half King and three of his tribesmen to accompany him as guides. Buffeted by unceasing storms, they toiled on to Venango, where there was an English trading-house, which the French had seized and converted into a military post. Chabert de Joncaire commanded, and received the party most civilly. Major Washington was banqueted that evening by the officers of the post, and as the wine flowed freely, the French forgot their prudence, and declared unreservedly that they intended keeping possession of the Ohio, whether the English liked it or not. Joncaire, however, asserted that he could not receive Dinwiddie's letter, and referred Major Washington to his superior officer at Fort le Bœuf. So, leaving Venango, for four days more the party struggled northward. The

narrow traders' path had been quite blotted out, and the forest was piled waist-deep with snow. At last, when it seemed that human endurance could win no further, they sighted the squared chestnut walls of Fort le Boeuf.

The commander here, Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, also received them well, and to him Major Washington delivered his letter from Governor Dinwiddie, asking by what right the French had crossed the Lakes and invaded British territory, and demanding their immediate withdrawal. Saint-Pierre was three days preparing his answer, which he intrusted to Major Washington, and at the end of that time the latter, with great difficulty persuading his Indians to accompany him, started back to Virginia. They reached Venango on Christmas Day. Here their horses gave out, and he and Gist pushed forward alone on foot, leaving the others to follow as best they might. A French Indian fired at them from ambush, but missed his mark, and to escape pursuit by his tribesmen, they walked steadily forward for a day and a night, until they reached the Allegheny. They tried to make the crossing on a raft, but were caught in the drifting ice and nearly drowned before they gained an island in the middle of the river. Here they remained all night, foodless and well-nigh frozen, and in the morning, finding the ice set, crossed in safety to the shore. Once across, they reached the house of a man named Fraser, on the Monongahela, — a house they were to see again, but under far different circumstances, — and leaving there on

the first day of January, they made their way back to the settlements without adventure. Major Washington had reached Mount Vernon that afternoon, and after stopping to see his mother, had ridden on to Riverview.

Long before the recital ended, I was out of my chair and pacing up and down the room, and Dorothy clapped her hands with joy when that perilous passage of the Allegheny had been accomplished.

"So you think there will be war?" I asked. "But you do not know what M. de Saint-Pierre has written to the governor."

"I can guess," he answered, with a smile. "Yes, there will be war."

"And if there is?" I cried, all my eagerness in my face.

"And if there is, Mr. Stewart," he said calmly, but with a deep light in his eyes, "depend upon it, you shall go with me."

I wrung his hand madly. I could have embraced him. Dorothy laughed at my enthusiasm, but with a trace of tears in her eyes, or so I fancied.

Well, we were finally abed, and up betimes in the morning. Our horses were brought round from the stable, and our bags swung up behind the saddles. I had tried in vain, all the morning, to corner Dorothy so that I might say good-by with no one looking on, but the minx had eluded me, and I had to be content with a mere handclasp on the steps before the others. But as we rode away and I looked back for a last sight of her, she waved her

hands to me and blew me a kiss from her fingers. So my heart was warm within me as we pushed on through the dark aisles of the forest.

The roads were heavy with mud and melting snow, for the weather had turned warm, and it was not until mid-afternoon that we reached Fredericksburg. We stopped there an hour to feed and wind our horses, and then pressed on to the country seat of Mr. Philip Clayton, below Port Royal, on the Rappahannock. Major Washington had met Mr. Clayton at Williamsburg, and he welcomed us most kindly. By the evening of the second day we had reached King William Court House, where we found a very good inn, and the next day, just as evening came, we clattered into Williamsburg, very tired and very dirty. But without drawing rein, Major Washington rode straight to the governor's house, threw his bridle to a negro, and ordered a footman to announce him at once to his master.

"You are to come with me, Mr. Stewart," he said, seeing that I hesitated. "'T will be a good time to present you to his Excellency," and we walked together up the wide steps which led to the veranda.

Even as we reached the top, the door at the end of the hall was thrown violently open, and Governor Dinwiddie stumbled toward us, his face red with excitement. He had evidently just risen from table, for he carried a napkin in his hand, and there were traces of food on his expansive waistcoat, for he was anything but a dainty feeder.

His uncertain gait showed that he still suffered from the effects of a recent attack of paralysis.

"By God, Major Washington," he cried, "but I'm glad to see you! I'd begun to think the French or the Indians had gobbled you up. So you've got back, sir? And did you see the French?"

"I saw the French, your Excellency," answered Washington, taking his outstretched hand. "I delivered your message, and brought one in reply. But first let me present my friend, Mr. Thomas Stewart, who is a neighbor of mine at Mount Vernon and a man of spirit."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Stewart," said Dinwiddie, and he gave me his hand for an instant. "We may have need erelong of men of spirit."

"I trust so, certainly, your Excellency," I cried, and bowed before him.

Dinwiddie looked at me for an instant with a smile.

"Come, gentlemen," he said, "you have been riding all day, I dare say, and must have some refreshment," but Washington placed a hand on his arm as he turned to give an order to one of the waiting negroes.

"Not until I have made my report, Governor Dinwiddie," he said.

Dinwiddie turned back to him.

"You're a man after my own heart, Major Washington!" he cried. "Come into my office, both of you, for, in truth, I am dying of impatience to hear of the journey," and he led the way into a spacious room, where there was a great table

littered with papers, a dozen chairs, but little other furniture. The candles were brought, and Dinwiddie dropped into a deep chair, motioning Washington and myself to sit down opposite him. "Now, major," he cried, "let us have your story."

So Washington told again of the trip over the mountains and through the forests, Dinwiddie interrupting from time to time with an exclamation of wonder or approbation.

"Here is the message from M. de Saint-Pierre," concluded Washington, drawing a sealed packet from an inner pocket. "'T is somewhat stained by water, but I trust still legible."

Dinwiddie took it with nervous fingers, glanced at the superscription, tore it open, and ran his eyes rapidly over the contents. My hands were trembling, for I realized that on this note hung the issue of war or peace for America. He read it through a second time more slowly, then folded it very calmly and laid it down before him on the table. My heart sank within me, — it was peace, then, and there would be no employment for my sword. I had been wasting my time with Captain Paul. But when Dinwiddie raised his eyes, I saw they were agleam.

"M. de Saint-Pierre writes," he said, "that he cannot discuss the question of territory, since that is quite without his province, but will send my message to the Marquis Duquesne, in command of the French armies in America, at Quebec, and will await his orders. He adds that, in the mean time, he will remain at his post, as his general has commanded."

We were all upon our feet. I drew a deep breath, and saw that Washington's hand was trembling on his sword-hilt.

"Since he will not leave of his own accord," cried Dinwiddie, his calmness slipping from him in an instant, "there remains only one thing to be done, — he must be made to leave, and not a French uniform must be left in the Ohio valley! Major Washington, I offer you the senior majorship of the regiment which will march against him."

"And I accept, sir!" cried Washington, moved as I had seldom seen him. "May I ask your Excellency's permission to appoint Mr. Stewart here one of my ensigns?"

"Certainly," said the governor heartily. "From what I have seen of Mr. Stewart, I should conclude that nothing could be better;" and when I tried to stammer my thanks, he waved his hand to me kindly and rang for wine. "Let us drink," he said, as he filled the glasses, "to the success of our arms and the establishment of his Majesty's dominion on the Ohio."

CHAPTER IX

MY FIRST TASTE OF WARFARE

WHATEVER defects Dinwiddie may have had, indecision was certainly not one of them, and the very next day the machinery was set in motion for the advance against the French. Colonel Joshua Fry was selected to head the expedition, and Colonel Washington made second in command. Colonel Fry at one time taught mathematics at William and Mary, but found the routine of the class-room too humdrum, and so sought a more exciting life. He had found it along the borders of the frontier, and in 1750 was made colonel of militia and member of the governor's council. Two years later, he was sent to Logstown to treat with the Indians, and made a map of the colony. He knew the frontier as well as any white man, and because of this was chosen our commander.

Not a moment was to be lost, for Colonel Washington, while at Fort le Bœuf, had observed the great preparations made by the French to descend the Allegheny in the spring and take possession of the Ohio valley, but we hoped to forestall them. The triangle between the forks of the Ohio was admirably adapted for fortification, and it was proposed to throw up a fort there so that the

French would get a warm reception when their canoes came floating down the river, and be forced to retreat to the Lakes. Dinwiddie's energy was wide-felt, and the whole colony was soon astir.

He convened the House of Burgesses, laid Colonel Washington's report before it, and secured a grant of £10,000 for purposes of defense; he urged the governors of the other colonies, from the Carolinas north to Jersey, to send reinforcements at once to Will's Creek, whence the start was to be made; he sent messengers with presents to the Ohio Indians, pressing them to take up the hatchet against the French, and authorized the enlistment of three hundred men. William Trent, an Indian trader, and brother-in-law of Colonel George Croghan, was commissioned to raise a company of a hundred men from among the backwoodsmen along the frontier, and started at once for the Ohio country to get his men together and begin work on the fort, the main body to follow so soon as it could be properly equipped.

Long before this I had secured my uniform and accoutrements, — which my three shillings a day were far from paying for, — and was kept busy superintending the storage of wagons or drilling under Captain Adam Stephen, in whose company I was, at Alexandria. The men were for the most part poor whites, who had enlisted because they could earn their bread no other way, and promised to make but indifferent soldiers. We were provided with ten cannon, all four-pounders, which had been presented by the king to Virginia, and eighty

barrels of powder, together with small-arms, thirty tents, and six months' provision of flour, pork, and beef. These were forwarded to Will's Creek as rapidly as possible, but at the best it was slow work, and April was in sight before the expedition was ready to move. During near all of this time, Colonel Washington was virtually in command, for Colonel Fry was taken with a fever, which kept him for the most part to his bed. There seemed no prospect of his improvement, so he ordered the expedition to advance without him, he to follow so soon as he could sit a horse. That time was never to come, for he died at Will's Creek on the last day of May.

So at last the advance commenced, and from daylight to sunset we fought our way through the forest. It rained almost incessantly, and I admit the work was more severe than I had ever done, for the bridle-paths were too narrow to permit the passage of the guns and wagons, and a way had to be cut for them; yet all the men were in good spirits, animated by the example of Colonel Washington and the other officers. Those I came to know best were of Captain Stephen's company, and a braver, merrier set of men it has never been my privilege to meet. We were drawn from all the quarters of the globe. There was Lieutenant William Polson, a Scot, who had been concerned in the rebellion of '45, and so found it imperative to come to Virginia to spend the remainder of his days, though at the first scent of battle he was in arms again. There was Ensign William, Chev-

alier de Peyronie, a French Protestant, driven from his home much as the Fontaine family, and who had settled in Virginia. There was Lieutenant Thomas Waggoner, whom I was to know so well a year later. And above all, there was Ensign Carolus Gustavus de Spiltdorph, a quiet, unassuming fellow, but brave as a lion, who lies to-day in an unmarked grave on the bank of the Monongahela. I can see him yet, with his blue eyes and blond beard, sitting behind a cloud of smoke in one corner of the tent, listening to our wild talk with a queer gleam in his eyes, and putting in a word of dry sarcasm now and then. For when the day's march was done, those of us who were not on duty gathered in our tent and talked of the time when we should meet the French. And Peyronie, because, though a Frenchman, he had suffered most at their hands, was the most bloodthirsty of us all.

Then the first blow fell. It was the night of the twentieth of April, and our force had halted near Colonel Cresap's house, sixteen miles from Will's Creek. I was in charge of the sentries to the west of the camp. The weather had been cold and threatening, with a dash of rain now and then, and we had made only five miles that day, the guns and wagons miring in the muddy road, which for the most part was through a marsh. As evening came, the rain had set in steadily, and the sentries protected themselves as best they could behind the trees or under hastily constructed shelters. I had just made my first round and found all well, when I heard a sentry near by challenge sharply.

"What is it?" I cried, hastening to him, and then I saw that he had stopped a horseman. The horse was breathing in short, uncertain gasps, as though near winded.

"A courier from the Ohio, so he says, sir," answered the sentry.

"With an urgent message for Colonel Washington," added the man on horseback.

"Very well," I said, "come with me," and catching the horse by the bridle, I started toward the commander's tent, in which a light was still burning. A word to the sentry before it brought Colonel Washington himself to the door, and he signed for us to enter. The courier slipped from his horse, and would have fallen, had I not caught him and placed him on his feet.

"'T is the first time I have left the saddle for two days," he gasped, and I helped him into the tent, where he dropped upon a stool. Washington poured out a glass of brandy and handed it to him. He swallowed it at a gulp, and it gave him back a little of his strength.

"I bring bad news, Colonel Washington," he said. "Lieutenant Ward and his whole command were captured by the French on the seventeenth, and the fort at the forks of the Ohio is in their hands."

I turned cold under the blow, but Washington did not move a muscle, only his mouth seemed to tighten at the corners.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"Captain Trent and his men arrived at the Ohio

on the tenth of April," said the courier, "and we set to work at once to throw up the fort. We made good progress, but on the morning of the seventeenth, while Captain Trent and thirty of the men were absent, leaving Lieutenant Ward in command, the river was suddenly covered with canoes crowded with French and Indians. There were at least eight hundred of them, and they had a dozen pieces of artillery. We had no choice but to surrender."

"On what terms?" questioned Washington quickly.

"That we march out with the honors of war and return to Virginia."

"And this was done?"

"Yes, this was done. Lieutenant Ward and his men will join you in a day or two."

"You have done well," said Washington warmly. "I am sure Lieutenant Ward could have done naught else under the circumstances. Forty men are not expected to resist eight hundred, and I shall see that the occurrence is properly represented to the governor. Lieutenant Stewart, will you see that a meal and a good bed be provided? Good night, gentlemen."

We saluted and left the tent, and I led him over to our company quarters, where the best we had was placed before him. Other officers, who had got wind of his arrival, dropped in, and he told again the story of the meeting with the enemy. It was certain that there were from six to eight hundred French and a great number of Indians before us, while we were barely three hundred, and as I

returned to my post, I wondered if Colonel Washington would dare press on to face such odds. The answer came in the morning, when the order was given to march as usual. Two days later, we had reached Will's Creek, where we found Lieutenant Ward and his men awaiting us. He stated that there were not less than a thousand French at the forks of the Ohio. It was sheer folly to advance with our petty force in face of odds so overwhelming, and a council of the officers was called by Colonel Washington to determine what course to follow. It was decided that we advance as far as Red Stone Creek, on the Monongahela, thirty-seven miles this side the Forks, and there erect a fortification and await fresh orders. Stores had already been built at Red Stone for our munitions, and from there our great guns could be sent by water so soon as we were ready to attack the French. In conclusion, it was judged that it were better to occupy our men in cutting a road through the wilderness than that they should be allowed to waste their time in idleness and dissipation.

Captain Trent and the thirty men who were with him, hearing from the Indians of the disaster which had overtaken their companions, marched back to meet us, and joined us the next day. Trent himself met cold welcome, for his absence from the fort at the time of the attack was held to be most culpable. Dinwiddie was so enraged, when he learned of it, that he ordered Trent court-martialed forthwith, but this was never done. His backwoodsmen were wild and reckless fellows, in-

capable of discipline, and soon took themselves off to the settlements, while we toiled on westward through the now unbroken forest. Our advance to Will's Creek had been difficult enough, but it was nothing to the task which now confronted us, for the country grew more rough and broken, and there was not the semblance of a road. We were a week in making twenty miles, and accomplished that only by labor well-nigh superhuman.

The story of one day was the story of all the others. Obstacles confronted us at every step, but we struggled forward, dragging the wagons ourselves when the horses gave out, as they soon did, and finally, toward the end of May, we won through to a pleasant valley named Great Meadows, dominated by a mountain called Laurel Hill. Here there was abundant forage, and as the horses could go no further, Colonel Washington ordered a halt, and determined to await the promised reinforcements. A few days later, a company of regulars under Captain Mackay joined us, together with near a hundred men of the regiment who had remained behind with Colonel Fry, raising our numbers to four hundred men, though many were wasted with fever and dysentery.

Those of us who were able set to work throwing up a breastwork of logs, under the direction of Captain Robert Stobo, and at the end of three days had completed an inclosure a hundred feet square, with a rude cabin in the centre to hold our munitions and supplies.

There had been many alarms that the French

were marching against us, but all of them had proved untrue, so when, some days after, the report spread through the camp again that the enemy were near, I paid little heed to it, and went to sleep as usual. How long I slept, I do not know, but I was awakened by some one shaking me by the shoulder.

"Get up at once, lieutenant, and report at headquarters," said a voice I recognized as Waggoner's, and as I sat upright with a jerk, he passed on to awake another sleeper. I was out of bed in an instant, and threw on my clothing with nervous haste. I could hear a storm raging, and when I stepped outside the tent, I was almost blinded by the rain, driven in great sheets before the wind. I fought my way against it to Washington's tent, where I found Captain Stephen and some thirty men, and others coming up every moment.

"What is it?" I asked of Waggoner, who had got back to headquarters before me, but he shook his head to show that he knew no more than I.

A moment later, the flap of the tent was raised, and Colonel Washington appeared, wrapped in his cloak as though for a journey, and followed by an Indian, who, I learned afterwards, was none other than the Half King. He spoke a few words to Captain Stephen, and the order was given to form in double rank and march, Colonel Washington himself leading the expedition, which numbered all told some forty men.

I shall never forget that midnight march through the forest, with the rain falling in a deluge through the dripping trees, the lightning flashing and the

thunder rolling. We stumbled along upon each other's heels, falling over logs or underbrush, the wet branches switching our faces raw and soaking us through and through. It seemed to me that we must have covered fifteen or twenty miles, at least, when the first gray of the morning brightened the horizon and a halt was called, but really we had come little more than five. Here it was found that seven men had been lost upon the way, and that our powder was so wet that most of it was useless, to many of us the charge in our firelocks being all that remained serviceable. After an hour's halt, the order came again to march, with caution to move warily. Scouts were thrown out ahead, and soon came back with tidings that the enemy was hard by.

My hands were trembling with excitement as we crept forward to the edge of a rocky hollow, and as we looked down the slope, we could see the French below. There were thirty of them or more, and they were getting breakfast, their arms stacked beside them. Almost at the same instant their sentries saw us and gave the alarm.

"Follow me, men!" cried Washington, and he started down the slope, we after him. As we went, the French sprang to arms and gave us a volley, but it was badly aimed in their excitement and so did little damage. As we closed in on them we returned their fire, and some eight or nine fell, while the others, thinking doubtless that they had been surprised by a large force, threw down their guns and held up their hands in token of surrender.

Captain Stephen had been slightly wounded, but charged on down the slope ahead of us, and took prisoner a young officer, who refused to surrender, but kept on fighting until his sword was knocked from his hand. Then he began to tear his hair and curse in French, pointing now and again to another officer who lay among the dead. He grew so violent that he attracted Colonel Washington's attention.

"Come here a moment, Lieutenant Peyronie," he called. "You understand French. What is this fellow saying?"

Peyronie exchanged a few words with the prisoner, who stooped, drew a paper from the inner pocket of the dead officer's coat, and held it toward us. Peyronie took it, glanced over it with grave countenance, and turned to Colonel Washington.

"This man is Ensign Marie Drouillon, sir," he said. "The party was in command of Ensign Coulon de Jumonville, whom you see lying dead there. M. Drouillon claims that the party did not come against us as spies, or for the purpose of fighting, but simply to bring a message to you from M. de Contrecœur, who is in command of the fort at the forks of the Ohio, which, it seems, has been named Fort Duquesne. This is the message," and he held out the paper to Washington.

"'T is in French," said the latter, glancing over it. "What does it say?"

"It warns you to return to the settlements," answered Peyronie, "on the pretext that all the land this side the mountains belongs to France."

Here the prisoner, who was evidently laboring under great excitement, broke in, and said something rapidly in a loud voice, which made Peyronie flush, and drew nods and cries of approbation from the other prisoners.

"What does he say?" asked Washington, seeing that Peyronie hesitated.

"He says, sir," answered Peyronie, with evident reluctance, "that M. de Jumonville came in the character of an ambassador and has been assassinated."

Washington flushed hotly and his eyes grew dark.

"Ask M. Drouillon," he said, "why an ambassador thought it necessary to bring with him a guard of thirty men?"

Peyronie put the question, but Drouillon did not reply.

"Ask him also," continued Washington, "why he remained concealed near my troops for three days, instead of coming directly to me as an ambassador should have done?"

Again Peyronie put the question, and again there was no answer.

"Tell him," said Washington sternly, "that I see through his trick, — that I comprehend it thoroughly. M. Jumonville counted on using his pretext of ambassador to spy upon my camp, and to avert an attack in case he was discovered. Well, he produced his message too late. He has behaved as an enemy, and has been treated as such. That he is dead is wholly his own fault.

Had he chosen the part of an ambassador instead of that of a spy, this would not have happened."

He turned away, and apparently dismissed the matter from his mind, but that it troubled him long afterward I am quite certain, though in the whole affair no particle of blame attached to him. The French made a great outcry about it, but I have never heard that any of them ever answered the questions which were put to M. Drouillon. The truth of the matter is, that they were only too eager for some pretext upon which to base the assertion that it was the English who began hostilities, and this flimsy excuse was the best they could invent. But that little brush under the trees on that windy May morning was to have momentous consequences, for it was the beginning of the struggle which drenched the continent in blood.

CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH SCORE FIRST

We marched back to the camp at Great Meadows with our prisoners, — some twenty in all, — much elated at our success, but near dead with fatigue. Lieutenant Spiltdorph was selected to escort them to Virginia, and set off with them toward noon, together with twenty men, cursing the ill-luck which deprived him of the opportunity to make the remainder of the campaign with us.

For that the French would march against us in force was well-nigh certain, once they learned of Jumonville's defeat, of which the Indians would soon inform them, and that we should be outnumbered three or four to one seemed inevitable. But no one thought of retreat, our commander, I am sure, least of all. He seemed everywhere at once, heartening the men, inspecting equipment, overseeing the preparations for defense. The only hostile element in the camp was the company of regulars under Captain Mackay, who refused to assist in any of the work, asserting that they were employed only to fight. Captain Mackay, too, holding his commission from the king, claimed to outrank Colonel Washington, and yielded him but a reluctant and sullen obedience.

Christopher Gist, who had just come from Will's Creek with tidings of Colonel Fry's death, was of the opinion that a much more effective resistance might be made at his plantation, twelve miles further on, where there were some strong log buildings and a ground, so he claimed, admirably suited for intrenchment. Accordingly, we set out for there, arriving after a fatiguing journey. The horses were in worse case than ever, and only two miserable teams and a few tottering pack-horses remained capable of working. Finally, on the twenty-ninth of June, the Half King, who had been our faithful friend throughout, brought us word that seven hundred French and three or four hundred Indians had marched from Fort Duquesne against us. As the news spread through the camp, the officers left the intrenchments upon which they had been at work, and gathered to discuss the news. There a message from Colonel Washington summoned us to a conference at Gist's cabin.

"Gentlemen," he said, when we had all assembled, "I need not tell you that the situation is most critical. We can scarce hope to successfully oppose an enemy who outnumbers us three to one, and yet 't is impossible to retreat without abandoning all our baggage and munitions, since we have no means of transport."

He fell silent for a moment, and no one spoke. I saw that the worry of the last few weeks had left its mark upon him, for there was a line between his eyes which I had never seen before, but which never left him afterward.

"What I propose," he said at last, "is to fall back to Great Meadows. I believe it to be better fitted for defense than this place, which is commanded by half a dozen hills, and where we could not hope to hold out against artillery fire. At Great Meadows we can strengthen our intrenchment in the middle of the plain, and the French will hardly dare attempt to carry it by assault, since they must advance without cover for two hundred yards or more. It is a charming field for an encounter. Has any one a better plan?"

Mackay was the first to speak.

"'T is better to lose our baggage than to lose both it and our lives," he said. "The French may not care to risk an assault, but they have only to sit down about the work for a day or two to starve us out."

"That is true," answered Washington, and his face was very grave; "yet reinforcements cannot be far distant. Two independent companies from New York reached Annapolis a fortnight since, and are doubtless being hurried forward. Other companies have arrived in the colony, and must be near at hand. Besides," he added, in a firmer tone, "I cannot consent to return to Virginia without striking at least one blow at the French, else this expedition might just as well have never been begun."

"That is the point!" cried Stephen. "Let us not run away until we see something to run from. Your plan is the best possible under the circumstances, Colonel Washington."

We all of us echoed this opinion, and after thanking us warmly, our commander bade us make ready at once for the return to Great Meadows. The baggage was done into packs as large as a man could carry; a force was told off to drag the swivels; the officers added their horses to the train, and prepared to carry packs just as the men did. Colonel Washington left half of his personal baggage behind, paying some soldiers four pistoles to carry the remainder. So at daybreak we set out, the sufferings of our men being greatly aggravated by the conduct of the regulars, who refused to carry a pound of baggage or place a hand upon the ropes by which we dragged our guns after us.

The miseries of that day I hope never to see repeated. Men dropped senseless on the road, or fell beneath the trees, unable to go further. The main body of the troops struggled on, leaving these stragglers to follow when they could, and on the morning of the next day we reached Great Meadows, weak, trembling, and exhausted. But even here there was no rest for us, for it was necessary to strengthen our defenses against the attack which could not be long deferred. The breastwork seemed all too weak now we knew the force which would be brought against it, and we started to dig a trench around it, but so feeble were the men that it was only half completed. Even at the best, our condition was little short of desperate. Much of our ammunition had been ruined, and our supply of provisions was near

gone. We had been without bread for above a week, and while we had plenty of cattle for beef, we had no salt with which to cure the meat, and the hot summer sun soon made it unfit to eat.

Yet, with all this, there was little murmuring, the example of our commander encouraging us all. At our council in our tent that evening, Peyronie, with invincible good humor, declared that no man could complain so long as the tobacco lasted, and in a cloud of blue-gray smoke, we gave our hastily constructed fort the suggestive name of "Fort Necessity."

The morning of the third of July was spent by us in overhauling the firelocks and making the last dispositions of our men. Colonel Washington inspected personally the whole line, and saw that no detail was overlooked. He had not slept for two nights, but seemed indefatigable, and even the regulars cheered him as he passed along the breastwork. But at last the inspection was finished and we settled down to wait.

Peyronie and myself had been stationed at the northwest corner of the fort with thirty men, and just before noon, from far away in the forest, came the sound of a single musket shot. We waited in suspense for what might follow, and in a moment a sentry came running from the wood with one arm swinging useless by his side.

"They have come!" he cried, as he tumbled over the breastwork. "They will be here in a moment," and even as he spoke, the edge of the forest was filled with French and Indians, and a

lively fire was opened against us, but the range was so great that the bullets did no damage. The drums beat the alarm, and expecting a general attack, we were formed in column before the intrenchment. But the enemy had no stomach for that kind of work, and veered off to the south, where they occupied two little hills, whence they could enfilade a portion of our position. We answered their fire as best we could, but it was cruel, disheartening work.

"Do you call this war?" asked Peyronie impatiently, after an hour of this gunnery. "In faith, had I thought 't would be like this, I had been less eager to enlist. Why don't the cowards try an assault?"

"Yes, why don't they?" and I looked gloomily at the wall of trees from which jets of smoke and flame puffed incessantly.

"'T is not the kind of fighting I 've been used to," cried Peyronie. "In Europe we fight on open ground, where the best man wins; we do not skulk behind the trees and through the underbrush. I 've a good notion to try a sally. What say you, Stewart?"

"Here comes Colonel Washington," I answered. "Let us ask him." But he shook his head when we proposed it to him.

"'T would be madness," he said. "They are three times our number, and would pick us all off before we could reach the trees. No, the best we can do is to remain behind our breastwork. It seems a mean kind of warfare, I admit, but 't is a

kind we must get accustomed to, if we are to fight the French and Indians;" and he walked on along his rounds, speaking a word of encouragement here and there, and seemingly quite unconscious of the bullets which whistled about him.

Yet the breastwork did not protect us wholly, for now and then a man would throw up his arms and fall with a single shrill cry, or roll over in the mud of the trench, cursing horribly, with a bullet in him somewhere. Doctor Craik, who had enlisted as lieutenant, was soon compelled to lay aside his gun and do what he could to relieve their suffering. Not for a moment during the afternoon did the enemy's fire slacken, and the strain began to tell upon our men. The pieces grew foul, there were only two screw-rods in the camp with which to clean them, and as the hours passed, our fire grew less and less. The swivels had long since been abandoned, for the gunners were picked off so soon as they showed themselves above the breastwork.

There had been mutterings of thunder and dashes of rain all the afternoon, and now the storm broke in earnest, the rain falling in such fury as I had never seen. The trenches filled with water, and we tried in vain to keep dry the powder in our cartouch boxes. Not only was this wet, but the rain leaked through the magazine we had built in the middle of the camp, and ruined the ammunition we had stored there. So soon as the rain slackened, the enemy resumed their fire, but Major Washington forbade us to reply, since there was

scarce a dozen rounds in the fort. I confess that this species of fighting took the heart out of me, and I could see no chance of a successful issue.

I was sitting thus, looking gloomily out at the forest in front of me, and wondering why the fire from there had ceased, when I noticed that there seemed to be many more rocks and bushes scattered about the plain than I had ever before observed. The gloom of the evening had fallen, and I rubbed my eyes and looked again to make sure I was not mistaken. No, there was no mistake, and I suddenly understood what was about to happen.

"Peyronie," I whispered to my neighbor, who was sitting in the mud, swearing softly under his mustache, "we are going to have some excitement presently. The Indians are creeping up to carry us by assault."

"What?" he exclaimed, sitting suddenly upright. "Oh, no such luck!"

"Yes, but they are," I insisted. "Watch those bushes out there. See, they 're moving up toward us."

He rose to his knees and peered keenly out through the gloom.

"Pardieu," he muttered after a moment, "so they are! Well, we shall be ready for them."

We passed the word around to our men, and startled them into new life. The muskets were primed sparingly with dry powder, and we waited with tense nerves for the assault. The fusillade from the hills had been redoubled, but a terrible

and threatening silence hung over the intrenchment, and doubtless encouraged our assailants to believe that our ammunition was quite gone. Near and nearer crept the Indians, fifty or sixty of them at least, and perhaps many more, and we lay still with bursting pulses and waited. Now the foremost of them was scarce forty yards away, and suddenly, with a yell, they were all upon their feet and charging us.

"Tirez, tirez!" shouted Peyronie, forgetting his English in his excitement, and we sent a volley full into them. It was a warmer reception than they had counted on, and they wavered for a moment, but there must have been a Frenchman leading them, for they rallied, and came on again with a rush. We met them with fixed bayonets, but they outnumbered us so greatly that we must have given way before them had not Colonel Washington, hearing the uproar and guessing its meaning, dashed over at the head of reinforcements and given them another volley. As I was reloading with feverish haste, I saw an Indian rush at Colonel Washington with raised tomahawk. Washington raised his pistol, coolly took aim, and pulled the trigger, but the powder flashed and did not explode. With the sweat starting from my forehead, I dashed some powder into the pan of my pistol, jerked it up, and fired. Ah, Captain Paul, how I blessed your lessons in that moment! for the ball went true, and the Indian rolled in the mud almost at Washington's feet. They had had enough, and those who were still alive leaped

the trench and disappeared into the outer darkness.

"They won't try that again," I remarked to Peyronie, who was sitting against the breastwork. "But what is it, man? Are you wounded?" I cried, seeing that he was very pale and held both hands to his breast.

"Yes, I am hit here," he answered, and added, as I fell on my knees beside him and began to tear the clothing from the wound, "but do not distress yourself, Stewart. I can be attended after the battle is won."

"Nonsense," I said. "You shall be attended at once." He smiled up at me, and then went suddenly white and fell against my shoulder. I tore away his shirt, and saw that blood was welling from a wound in the breast. I propped him against the wall, and ordering one of the men to go for Doctor Craik, stanched the blood as well as I could. The doctor hastened to us so soon as he could leave his other wounded, but he shook his head gravely when he saw Peyronie's injury.

"A bad case," he said. "Clear into the lungs, I think. But I have seen men recover of worse hurts," he added, seeing how pale I was.

I watched him as he bound up the wound with deft fingers, and then between us we carried him to the little cabin, which had been converted from magazine to hospital, and was already crowded from wall to wall. It was with a sore heart that I left him and returned to the breastwork, for I had come to love Peyronie dearly. The event

was not so serious as I then feared, for, after a gallant fight for life, he won the battle, recovered of his wound, and lived to do service in another war.

The repulse of the Indians seemed to have disheartened the enemy, for their fire slackened until only a shot now and then broke the stillness of the night. Our condition was desperate as it could well be, yet I heard no word of surrender. I was sitting listlessly, thinking of Peyronie's wound, when a whisper ran along the lines that the French were sending a flag of truce. Sure enough, we could see a man in white uniform approaching the breastwork, waving a white flag above his head. He was halted by the sentries while yet some distance off, and Colonel Washington sent for. He appeared in a moment.

"Where is Lieutenant Peyronie?" he asked. "We will have need of him."

"He is wounded, sir," I answered. "He was shot through the breast during the assault."

Washington glanced about at the circle of faces.

"Is there any other here who speaks French?" he asked.

There was a moment's silence.

"Why, sir," said Vanbraam at last, "I have managed to pick up the fag ends of a good many languages during my life, and I can jabber French a little."

"Very well," and Washington motioned him forward. "Mount the breastwork and ask this fellow what he wants."

Vanbraam did as he was bid, and there was a moment's high-toned conversation between him and the Frenchman.

"He says, sir," said Vanbraam, "that he has been sent by his commander, M. Coulon-Villiers, to propose a parley."

Washington looked at him keenly.

"And he wishes to enter the fort?"

"He says he wishes to see you, sir."

Washington glanced about at the mud-filled trenches, the ragged, weary men, the haggard faces of the officers, the dead scattered here and there along the breastwork, and his face grew stern.

"'T is a trick!" he cried. "He wishes to see how we are situated. Tell him that we do not care to parley, but are well prepared to defend ourselves against any force the French can muster."

I gasped at the audacity of the man, and the Frenchman was doubtless no less astonished. He disappeared into the forest, but half an hour later again approached the fort. Vanbraam's services as interpreter were called for a second time, and there was a longer parley between him and the messenger.

"He proposes," said Vanbraam, when the talk was finished, "that we send two officers to meet two French officers, for the purpose of agreeing upon articles of capitulation. M. Coulon-Villiers states that he is prepared to make many concessions, and he believes this course will be for the advantage of both parties."

Washington looked around at the officers grouped about him.

"It is clear that we must endeavor to make terms, gentlemen," he said. "The morning will disclose our plight to the enemy, and it will then be no longer a question of terms, but of surrender. At present they believe us capable of defense, hence they talk of concessions. What say you, gentlemen?"

There was nothing to be said except to agree, and Vanbraam and Captain Stephen were sent out to confer with the French. They returned in the course of an hour, bringing with them the articles already signed by Coulon-Villiers, and awaiting only Colonel Washington's ratification. Vanbraam read them aloud by the light of a flickering candle, and we listened in silence until he had finished. They were better than we could have hoped, providing that we should march out at daybreak with all the honors of war, drums beating, flags flying, and match lighted for our cannon; that we should take with us our baggage, be protected from the Indians, and be permitted to retire unmolested to Virginia, in return for which we were to release all the prisoners we had taken a few days before, and as they were already on their way to the colony, should leave two officers with the French as hostages until the prisoners had been delivered to them.

There was a moment's silence when Vanbraam had finished reading, and then, without raising his head, Colonel Washington signed, and threw the

pen far from him. Then he arose and walked slowly to his quarters, and I saw him no more that night. Captain Mackay insisted also that he must sign the paper, and, to my intense disgust, wrote his name in above that of our commander.

There was little sleep for any of us that night, and I almost envied Peyronie tossing on his blanket, oblivious to what was passing about him. Vanbraam and Robert Stobo were appointed to accompany the French back to the Ohio, to remain there as hostages, and we all shook hands with them before they went away through the darkness toward the French camp.

But the night passed, and at daybreak we abandoned the fort and began the retreat, carrying our sick and wounded on our backs, since the Indians had killed all our horses. Most of our baggage was perforce left behind, and the Indians lost no time in looting it. That done, they pressed threateningly upon our rear, so that an attack seemed imminent, nor did the French make any effort to restrain them; but we held firm, and the Indians finally drew off and returned to the fort, leaving us to cover as best we might those weary miles over the mountains. By the promise of ten pistoles, I had secured two men to bear Peyronie between them on a blanket, but 't was impossible to treat all the wounded so, and the fainting men staggered along under their screaming burdens, falling sometimes, and lying where they fell from sheer exhaustion.

What Colonel Washington's feelings were I

could only guess. He strode at the head of the column, his head bowed on his breast, his heart doubtless torn by the suffering about him, and saying not a word for hours together, nor did any venture to approach him. I doubt if ever in his life he will be called upon to pass through a darker hour than he did on that morning of the fourth of July, 1754. Through no fault of his, the power of England on the Ohio had been dealt a staggering blow, and his pride and ambition crushed into the dust.

What need to tell of that weary march back to the settlements, the suffering by the way, the sorry reception accorded us, the consternation caused by the news of French success? At Winchester we met two companies from North Carolina which had been marching to join us, and these were ordered to Will's Creek, to establish a post to protect the frontier from the expected Indian aggression. Captain Mackay and his men remained at Winchester, while our regiment returned to Alexandria to rest and recruit. As for me, I was glad enough to put off the harness of war and make the best of my way back to Riverview, saddened and humbled by this first experience, which was so different from the warfare of which I had read and dreamed, with its bright pageantry, its charges and shock of arms, its feats of single combat. Fate willed that I was yet to see another, trained on the battlefields of Europe, humbled in the dust by these foes whom I found so despicable, and the soldiers of the king taught a lesson they were never to forget.

One word more. Perhaps I have been unjust to Captain Mackay and his men. Time has done much to soften the bitterness with which their conduct filled me, and as I look back now across the score of years that lie between, I can appreciate to some degree their attitude toward our commander. Certainly it might seem a dangerous thing to intrust an enterprise of such moment to a youth of twenty-two, with no knowledge of warfare but that he had gained from books. It is perhaps not wonderful that veterans should have looked at him askance, and I would not think of them too harshly. He doubtless made mistakes, — as what man would not have done? — yet I believe that not even the first captain of the empire could have snatched victory from odds so desperate.

CHAPTER XI

DREAM DAYS AT RIVERVIEW

In the many summer evenings which followed, I played the part of that broken soldier, who, as Mr. Goldsmith tells us so delightfully,

> "talked the night away,
> Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
> Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won."

Alas, I could show not how they were won, but only how they were lost, and how was one to clothe in romance a battle which had been fought in the midst of mud and rain, from behind a breastwork, and with scarce a glimpse of the enemy? But I had a rapt audience of two in James and Dorothy. They were not critical, and I told the story of Great Meadows over and over again, a score of times.

A hundred yards from the house, overlooking on one side the willow-draped waters of Occoquan Inlet, and on the other the broad and placid river, a seat had been fashioned between two massive oaks, and here, of an evening, it was our wont to go. Sometimes, by great good fortune, James did not accompany us, and Dorothy and I would sit there alone together and watch the shadows deepen across the water. Our talk would falter and die

away before the beauty of the scene, and there would be long silences, broken only now and then by a half whispered sentence. I had never known a sweeter time, and even yet, when night is coming on, I love to steal forth to sit there again and gaze across the water and dream upon the past.

During the day, I saw but little of the other members of the family, and was left greatly to my own resources. My aunt was ever busy with the management of the estate, to every detail of which she gave personal attention, and which she administered with a thrift and thoroughness I could not but admire. The worry of incessant business left its mark upon her. The lines in her face deepened, and the silver in her hair grew more pronounced, but though she doubtless felt her strength failing, she clung grimly to the work. I would have offered to assist her but that I knew she would resent the suggestion, and would believe I made it to gain some knowledge of the income from the estate, of which I had always been kept in densest ignorance, and with which, indeed, I troubled myself but little. I think her old fear of my claiming the place came on her again, and though she always tried to treat me civilly, the effort in the end proved too great for her overwrought nerves, as you shall presently hear.

Upon Dorothy fell the duty of looking after the household, and she went about it cheerfully and willingly. Her mornings were passed in instructing the servants in their duties and seeing that their work was properly done. There were visits

to the pantry and kitchen, and a long conference with the cook, so that noon was soon at hand. The afternoon was spent in the great workroom on the upper floor, into which I ventured to peep once or twice, only to be bidden to go about my business. But it was a pleasant sight, and I sometimes gathered courage to steal down the corridor for a glimpse of it. There sat Dorothy in a dainty gown of Covent Garden calico, directing half a dozen old negro women, who were cutting out and sewing together the winter clothing of fearnaught for the slaves. Two or three girls had been brought in to be taught the mysteries of needle-craft, and Dorothy turned to them from time to time to watch their work and direct their rebellious fingers. I would fain have taken a lesson, too, but when I proposed this one day, representing how great my need might be when I was over the mountains far away from any woman, Dorothy informed me sternly, amid the titters of the others, that my fingers were too big and clumsy to be taught to manage so delicate an instrument as a needle, and sent me from the room.

Young James had also much to occupy his time. His mother was as yet in doubt whether he should complete his education at William and Mary, as I had done, or should be sent to London to acquire the true polish. The boy greatly favored the latter course, as any boy of spirit would have done, and his mother would have yielded to him readily, but for the stories she had heard of the riotous living which prevailed among the young blades in Lon-

don, and of which she had had ample confirmation from Parson Scott, who, I suspect, before coming to his estate at Westwood, had ruffled it with the best of them. Whether it should be Williamsburg or London, the boy was required to be kept at his books every morning, and was off every afternoon to the Dumfries tavern, where there was always a crowd of ne'er-do-wells, promoting a cock-fight, or a horse race, or eye-gouging contest. Sometimes, he elected to spend the evening in this company, and it was then that Dorothy and I were left alone together on the seat beside the river.

But when Sunday came, there was another story. The great coach was brought from the stable and polished till it shone again, — indeed, it had been polished so often and so vigorously that its gilding and paint began to show the marks of it. The four horses were led out, rubbed down from nose to heel, and harnessed in their brightest trappings. The driver, footman, and two outriders donned their liveries, in which they were the envy of all the other servants, and the coach was driven around to the front of the house, from which presently emerged Madame Stewart, in a stately gown of flowered calamanco, her fan and gold pomander in her hand. Then came Dorothy, her sweet face looking most coquettish under her Ranelagh mob of gauze, the ribbons crossed beneath her chin and fluttering half a yard behind. As she tripped down the steps and lifted her tiffany petticoat ever so little, I could catch a glimpse of the prettiest pair of ankles in the world in silk-clocked hose, for

the reader can guess without my telling that I was close behind, holding her kerchief or her fan or her silver étui until she should be safely seated in the coach. And that once done, the whip cracked, the wheels started, and I swung myself on horseback and trotted along beside the window, on Dorothy's side, you may be sure.

So, in great state, we proceeded to the new Quantico church near Dumfries, a prodigious fine structure of brick, built the year before at a cost of a hundred thousand weight of tobacco, of which my aunt had contributed a tenth. The other members of the congregation awaited our arrival, grouped before the door, and, entering after us, remained decently standing till we had mounted to the loft and taken our seats, a show of deference which greatly pleased my aunt. The church was built in a little recess from the road, in the midst of a grove of ancient trees, cruciform, as so many others were throughout the colony, and stands today just as it stood then, — as I have good cause to know, for 't was in that church, before that altar — But there, you shall learn it all in time.

Doctor Scott was a goodly preacher, but the one portion of the service for me was the singing, when I might stand beside Dorothy and listen to her voice. She sang with whole heart and undivided mind, recking nothing of me standing spellbound there. Indeed, I think the pastor shrewdly saw that her singing was a means of grace no less than his expounding, and he never failed to journey to Riverview on a Friday to talk over with her

what should be her part in the service on the coming Sunday. Nor did I ever know her to refuse this labor, — not because she was vain of her power, but because she saw the good it did.

The service once over, there were greetings to exchange, the news of the neighborhood to talk over, crops to discuss, and what not. My heart would burn within me as I saw the men buzzing about Dorothy like flies about a dish of honey, though my jealousy was lightened when I saw that while she had a gay word for each of them, she smiled on all alike. The minx could read my mind like an open book, whether I was moping in one corner of the churchyard or on the bench beside her, and she loved to tease me by pretending great admiration for this man or that, and consulting me about him as she would have done a brother. Which, I need hardly say, annoyed me vastly.

The gossip over, we drove home again to lunch, after which, on the wide veranda or the bench by the river's edge, I would read Dorothy some bits of Mr. Addison or Mr. Pope, which latter she could not abide, though his pungent verses fell in exceeding well with my melancholy humor. Evening past and bedtime come, I lighted Dorothy's candle for her at the table in the lower hall, where the silver sticks were set out in their nightly array like French soldiers, gleaming all in white, and when I gave it to her and bade her good-night at the stair-foot, I got her hand to hold for an instant. Then to my room, where over innumerable pipes of sweet-scented, I struggled with some halting

verses of my own until my candle guttered in its stick.

Hours and hours did I pass thinking how I might tell her of my love, but at the last I concluded it were better to say nothing, until I had something more to offer her. What right had I, I questioned bitterly, to offer marriage to any maid, when I had no home to which to take a wife, and I had never felt the irksomeness of my circumstances as I did at that moment. Something of my thought she must have understood, for she was very kind to me, and never by any word or act showed that she thought of the poverty of my condition.

So August and September passed, and great events were stirring. The House of Burgesses had met, and had been much impressed by the showing we had made against the French, so that they passed a vote of thanks to Colonel Washington for his distinguished services, and to the officers and men who had been with him. Dinwiddie was most eager that another advance should be made at once against Duquesne, but Colonel Washington pointed out how hopeless any such attempt must be against the overwhelming odds the enemy would bring against us.

The news of French aggression on the Ohio and of our defeat at Fort Necessity had opened the eyes of the court to the danger which threatened the colonies, and great preparations were set on foot for an expedition to be sent to Virginia in the early spring. Parliament voted £50,000 toward

its expenses, and it was proposed to equip it on such a scale that the French could not hope to stand before it. So it was decided that nothing more should be attempted by the colony until the forces from England had arrived. And then, one day, came the astounding news that Colonel Washington had resigned from the service and returned to Mount Vernon. A negro whom Dorothy had sent on some errand to Betty Washington had brought the news back with him. I could scarcely credit it, and was soon galloping toward Mount Vernon to confirm it for myself. I dare say the ten miles of river road were never more quickly covered. As I turned into the broad graveled way which led past the garden up to the house, I saw a tall and well-known figure standing before the door, and he came toward me with a smile as I threw myself from the saddle.

"Ah, Tom," he cried, "I thought I should see you soon," and he took my hand warmly.

"Is it true," I asked, too anxious to delay an instant the solution of the mystery, "that you have left the service?"

"Yes, it is true."

"And you will not make the campaign?"

"I see no prospect now of doing so."

"But why?" I asked. "Pardon me, if I am indiscreet."

"'T is a reason which all may know," and he smiled grimly, "which, indeed, I wish all to know, that my action may not be misjudged."

We were walking up and down before the door,

and he paused a moment as though to choose his words, lest he say more than he desired.

"You know there has been great unpleasantness," he said at last, "between officers holding royal commissions and those holding provincial ones, concerning the matter of precedence. You may remember that Captain Mackay held himself my superior at Fort Necessity, because he had his commission from the crown."

Of course I remembered it, as well as the many disagreements which the contention had occasioned.

"It was evident that the question must be settled one way or another," continued Washington, "and to do this, an order has just been issued by the governor. The order provides that no officer who does not derive his commission immediately from the king can command one who does."

It was some minutes before I understood the full effect which such an order would have.

"Do you mean," I asked at last, "that you would be outranked by every subaltern in the service who holds a royal commission?"

"Unquestionably," and Washington looked away across the fields with a stern face.

"But that is an outrage!" I cried. "What, every whippersnapper in the line be your superior? Why, it 's rank folly!"

"So I thought," said Washington, "and therefore I resigned, and refused to serve under such conditions."

"And you did right," I said warmly. "You could have taken no other course."

But much pressure was brought to bear upon him to get him back into the service. General Sharpe was most anxious to secure the services of the best fighter and most experienced soldier in Virginia, and urged him to accept a company of the Virginia troops; but he replied shortly that, though strongly bent to arms, he had no inclination to hold a commission to which neither rank nor emolument attached. And that remained his answer to all like importunities. Whereat the authorities were greatly wroth at him, from Governor Dinwiddie down, and seeking how they might wound him further, cut from the rolls the names of half a dozen officers whom they knew to be his friends. I was one of those who got a discharge, the reason alleged in my case being that the companies had been so reduced in number that there was not need of so many officers. It was a heavy blow to me, I admit, and I think for a time Washington wavered in his purpose; but his friends, of whom many now came to Mount Vernon, persuaded him to remain firm in his resolution, confident that when the commander-in-chief arrived and learned how matters stood, he would make every reparation in his power. At the bottom of the entire trouble was, I think, Dinwiddie's jealousy of Washington's growing popularity and influence, a jealousy which had been roused by every man who had come into great favor with the people since Dinwiddie had been lieutenant-governor of Virginia.

During the months that followed I was much at Mount Vernon. Indeed, it was during that win-

ter that we formed the warm attachment which still continues. The family life there attracted me greatly, and I cannot sufficiently express my admiration for Mrs. Washington. She was slight and delicate of figure, but not even her eldest son, who towered above her, possessed a greater dignity or grace. I loved to sit at one corner of the great fireplace and see her eyes kindle with pride and affection as she gazed at him, nor did her other children love him less than she.

With the new year came renewed reports of activity in England. Two regiments under command of Major-General Braddock were to be sent to Virginia, whence, after being enforced by provincial levies, they were to march against the French. I need not say how both Colonel Washington and myself chafed at the thought that we were not to make the campaign; but when he suggested accepting a commission as captain of the provincial troops, his friends protested so against it that he finally abandoned the idea for good and all, and we settled down to bear the inactivity as best we could. But at last the summons came.

It was Colonel Washington's twenty-third birthday, and there was quite a celebration at Mount Vernon. The members of the family were all there, as were Dorothy, her brother, and myself, as well as many other friends from farther down the neck. Dinner was served in the long, low-ceilinged dining-room, with the wide fireplace in one corner. What a meal it was, with Mrs. Washington at the table-head and her son at the foot, —

yes, and Dorothy there beside me with the brightest of bright eyes! I was ever a good trencherman, and never did venison, wild turkey, and great yellow sweet potatoes taste more savorsome than they did that day, with a jar of Mrs. Washington's marmalade for relish. At the end came Pompey with a great steaming bowl of flip, and as the mugs were filled and passed from hand to hand, Dorothy and Betty Washington plunged in the red-hot irons with great hissing and sizzle and an aroma most delicious. We pledged our host, the ladies sipping from our cups — need I say who from mine? — with little startled cries of agitation when the liquor stung them. Then they left us to our pipes; but before the smoke was fairly started, there came the gallop of a horse up the roadway past the kitchen garden, and a moment later the great brass knocker was plied by a vigorous hand. We sat in mute expectancy, and presently old Pompey thrust in his head.

"Gen'leman t' see you, sah," he said to Colonel Washington.

"Show him in here, Pomp," said the colonel; and a moment later one of the governor's messengers entered, booted and spurred, his clothing splashed with mud.

"I have a message for you from the governor, Colonel Washington," he said, saluting, and holding out a letter bearing the governor's great seal.

Washington took it without a trace of emotion, though I doubt not his heart was beating as madly as my own.

"Sit down, sir," he said heartily to the messenger, "and taste our punch. I am sure you will find it excellent;" and when he had seen him seated and served, he turned away to the window and opened the letter. I watched him eagerly as he read it, and saw a slow flush steal into his cheeks.

"There is nothing here I may not tell, gentlemen," he said after a moment, turning back to the group about the table. "Governor Dinwiddie writes me that General Braddock and the first of the transports have arrived safely off Hampton, and that he desires me to meet him in Williamsburg as soon as possible, as he thinks my knowledge of the country may be of some value. I shall start in the morning," he added, turning to the messenger. "I trust you will remain and be our guest till then."

"Gladly," answered the man, "and ride back with you." So it was settled.

We were not long away from the women after that, for they must hear the great news. Colonel Washington refused to speculate about it, but I was certain he was to be proffered some employment in the coming campaign commensurate with his merit. The afternoon passed all too quickly, and the moment came for us to start back to Riverview. Dorothy ran upstairs to don her safeguard, the horses were brought out, and James and I struggled into our coats. Dorothy was back in a moment, kissed Mrs. Washington and Betty, and I helped her adjust her mask and lifted her to the saddle. I felt my cheeks burning as I

turned to bid good-by to Colonel Washington, who had followed us from the house.

"If it should be an appointment," I began, as I grasped his hand.

"You may be sure I shall not forget you, Tom," he said, smiling down into my eager face. "I think it very likely that we shall march together to fight the French."

And those last words rang in my ears all the way back to Riverview.

CHAPTER XII

DOROTHY MAKES HER CHOICE

I HAD been much from home during the winter, and, engrossed in my own thoughts, had taken small account of what was passing, but I soon found enough to occupy me. Dorothy had spent a month at Mount Pleasant, the seat of the Lees, some distance down the river, and when she returned, I soon began to suspect that she had left her heart there; for one day there came riding up to Riverview Mr. Willoughby Newton, whose estate was near Mount Pleasant, and the way that Dorothy blushed when she welcomed him aroused my ire at once. Now Mr. Willoughby Newton was a very handsome and proper gentleman, and on his broad acres grew some of the sweetest tobacco that ever left Virginia; but I could scarce treat him civilly, which only shows what an insufferable puppy I still was, and I made myself most miserable. His learning was more of the court and camp than of the bookshelf, — a defect which I soon discovered, — and I loved to set him tripping over some quibble of words, a proceeding which amused me vastly, though my mirth was shared by none of the others who witnessed it. In fact, Madame Stewart was partial to the man from the first, in which I

do not blame her, for a better match could not have been desired for her daughter. She made him see his welcome, and he doubtless thought the road to Dorothy's heart a fair and easy one. I certainly thought so, and I spent my days in moping about the place, cutting a most melancholy and unattractive figure.

I can look back now with a smile upon those days, realizing what a ridiculous sight I must have been, but at the time, their tragedy was for me a very real and living one. Newton had passed some years in London, and had picked up there the graces of the court, as well as much of its frippery gossip, which latter he was fond of retailing, to my great disgust, but to the vast entertainment of the ladies, who found no fault with it, though it was four or five years old. He could tell a story well and turn a joke to a nicety, — a fact which I was at that time far from admitting, — and under other circumstances I should have found him a witty and amusing friend. I think he soon saw what my feelings were, — indeed, even a more obtuse man would have had no difficulty in understanding them, — and he treated me with a good-humored condescension which irritated me beyond measure. And yet, unquestionably, it was the only treatment my behavior merited.

The climax came one evening after dinner. We had both, perhaps, had a glass of wine too much before we joined the ladies. Certainly, no words had passed between us when they had left the table, and there was nothing to do but drink, which we

did with moody perseverance. But once before the fire in the great hall, with Madame Stewart knitting on one side and Dorothy bending over her tambour on the other, his mood changed and he grew talkative enough, while I sat down near the candles and pretended to be absorbed in a book.

"Do you know, ladies," he said, "this reminds me of nothing so much as a night in London just five years ago, when the great earthquake was. We were sitting around the fire, just as we are siting now, Tommy Collier on my right, and Harry Sibley on my left, when the bottles on the table began to clink and the windows to rattle, and poor Harry, who was leaning back in his chair, crashed over backwards to the floor. We picked him up and went out into the street, where there was confusion worse confounded. Windows were thrown open, women were running up and down clad only in their smocks, and one fellow had mounted a barrel and was calling on the people to repent because the Day of Judgment was at hand. Somebody predicted there would be another earthquake in a week, and so the next day the people began to pour out of town, not because they were frightened, but 'Lord, the weather is so fine,' they said, 'one can't help going into the country.'"

"You found the country very pleasant, Mr. Newton, I dare say," I remarked, looking up from my book. He did not at once understand the meaning of my question, but Dorothy did, and flushed crimson with anger. The sight of her disapproval and Madame Stewart's frowning face maddened me.

"No," he said slowly, after a moment, "I did not leave the city, but hundreds of people did. Within three days, over seven hundred coaches were counted passing Hyde Park corner, with whole families going to the country. The clergy preached that it was judgment on London for its wickedness, and that the next earthquake would swallow up the whole town. The ridotto had to be put off because there was no one to attend it, and the women who remained in town spent their time between reading Sherlock's sermons and making earthquake gowns, in which they proposed to sit out of doors all night."

"Pray, what was the color of your gown, Mr. Newton?" I inquired, with a polite show of interest.

Newton rose slowly from his chair and came toward me.

"Am I to understand that you mean to insult me, sir?" he asked, when he had got quite near.

"You are to understand whatever you please," I answered hotly, throwing my book upon the table.

"Tom," cried Dorothy, "for shame, sir! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Do not be frightened, I beg of you, Miss Randolph," interrupted Newton, restraining her with one hand. "I assure you that I have no intention of injuring the boy."

"Injuring me, indeed!" I cried, springing to my feet, furious with rage, for I could not bear to be patronized. "It is you who are insulting, and by God you shall answer for it!"

"As you will," he said, with a light laugh, and turned back to the fire.

I knew that I had got all the worst of the encounter, that I had behaved with a rudeness for which there was no excuse, and that I cut a sorry figure standing there, and my face burned at the knowledge. But preserving what semblance of dignity I could, I stalked from the hall and upstairs to my room. I sat a long time thinking over the occurrence, and the more I pondered it, the more clearly I saw that I had played the fool. I did not know then, but I learned long afterward, that my conduct that night came near losing me the great happiness of my life. My cheeks flush even now as I think of my behavior. How foolish do the tragedies of youth appear, once time has tamed the blood!

I did not wonder in the morning to receive a summons from my aunt, and I found her in her accustomed chair before the table piled with papers. She glanced at me coldly as I entered, and finished looking over a paper she held in her hand before she spoke to me.

"I need not tell you," she said at length, "how greatly your boorish conduct of last night surprised me. To insult a guest, and especially to do so without provocation, is not the part of a gentleman."

I flushed angrily, for the justness of this statement only irritated me the more. I think it is always the man who is in the wrong that shows the greatest violence, and the man that most deserves rebuke who is most impatient of it.

"There is no need for you to counsel me how a gentleman should behave," I answered hotly.

"I did not summon you here to counsel you," she said still more coldly, "but to inform you that this disgraceful affair is to go no further, at least beneath this roof. Mr. Newton has promised me to overlook your behavior, which is most generous on his part, and I trust you will see the wisdom of making peace with him."

"And why, may I ask, madame?"

"Because," she said, looking me in the eyes, "it is most likely that he will marry my daughter, and nothing is more vulgar than a family whose members are forever quarreling."

I clenched my hands until the nails pierced the flesh. She had hit me a hard blow, and she knew it.

"And what does Dorothy think of this arrangement?" I asked, with as great composure as I could muster.

She smiled with a calm assurance which made my heart sink. "Dorothy would be a fool not to accept him, for he is one of the most eligible gentlemen in Virginia. Indeed, perhaps she has already done so, for I gave him leave to speak to her this morning," and she smiled again as she noted my trembling hands, which I tried in vain to steady. "You seem much interested in the matter."

I turned from her without replying, — I could trust myself no further. Not that I blamed her for hating me, — for she loved her son and I was the shadow across his path, — but she was pressing

me further than I had counted on. I snatched up my hat as I ran along the hall and out the great door toward the river. Spring was coming, the trees were shaking out their foliage, along the river the wild flowers were beginning to show their tiny faces, but I saw none of these as I broke my way through the brush along the water's edge, — for perhaps even now he was asking Dorothy to be his wife, and she was yielding to him. The thought maddened me, — yet why should she do otherwise? What claim had I upon her? And yet I had builded such a different future for her and me.

I had walked I know not how long when I came out suddenly upon the road which wound along the bank and finally dipped to the ferry, and here I sat down upon a log to think. If Dorothy accepted him, I could no longer stay at Riverview. I must go away to Williamsburg and seek employment in the campaign, if only as a ranger. It must soon commence, and surely they would not refuse me in the ranks. As I sat absorbed in bitter thought, I heard the sound of hoofbeats up the road and saw a horseman coming. I drew back behind a tree, for I was in no mood to talk to any one, and gloomily watched him as he drew nearer. There seemed something strangely familiar about the figure, and in an instant I recognized him. It was Willoughby Newton. In another moment he had passed, his face a picture of rage and shame. He was riding away from Riverview in anger, and as I realized what that meant, I sprang forward with a great cry of joy. He must have heard me, for

he turned in the saddle and shook his whip at me, and for an instant drew rein as though to stop. But he thought better of it, for he settled again in the saddle, and was soon out of sight down the road.

I had not waited so long, for settling my hat on my head, I set off up the road as fast as my legs would carry me. It seemed to me I should never reach the house, and I cursed the folly which had taken me so far away, but at last I ran up the steps and into the hall. As I entered, I caught a glimpse of a well-known gown in the hall above, and in an instant I was up the stairs.

"Dorothy!" I gasped, seizing one of her hands, "Dorothy, tell me, you have told him no?"

I must have been a surprising object, covered with dust and breathless, but she leaned toward me and gave me her other hand.

"Yes, Tom," she said very softly, "I told him no. I do not love him, Tom, and I could not marry a man I do not love."

"Oh, Dorothy," I cried, "if you knew how glad I am! If you knew how I was raging along the river at the very thought that he was asking you, and fearing for your reply; for he is a very fine fellow, Dorothy," and I realized with amazement that all my resentment and anger against Newton had vanished in an instant. "But when I saw him ride by like a madman, I knew you had said no, and I came back as fast as I could to make certain."

Somehow, as I was speaking, I had drawn her toward me, and my arm was around her.

"Can you not guess, dear Dolly," I whispered "why I was so angry with him last night? It was because I knew he was going to ask you, and I feared that you might say yes."

I could feel her trembling now, and would have bent and kissed her, but that she sprang from me with a little frightened cry, and I turned to see her mother standing in the hall below.

"So," she said, mounting the steps with an ominous calmness, "my daughter sees fit to reject the addresses of Mr. Newton and yet receive those of Mr. Stewart. I perceive now why he was so deeply concerned in what I had to tell him this morning. May I ask, Mr. Stewart, if you consider yourself a good match for my daughter?"

"Good match or not, madame," I cried, "I love her, and if she will have me, she shall be my wife!"

"Fine talk!" she sneered. "To what estate will you take her, sir? On what income will you support her? My daughter has been accustomed to a gentle life."

"And if I have no estate to which to take her," I cried, "if I have no income by which to support her, remember, madame, that it is from choice, not from necessity!"

I could have bit my tongue the moment the words were out. Her anger had carried her further than she intended going, but for my ungenerous retort there was no excuse.

"Am I to understand this is a threat?" she asked, very pale, but quite composed.

"No, it is not a threat," I answered. "The

words were spoken in anger, and I am sorry for them. I have already told you my intentions in that matter, and have no purpose to change my mind. I will win myself a name and an estate, and then I will come back and claim your daughter. We shall soon both be of age."

She laughed bitterly.

"Until that day, then, Mr. Stewart," she said, "I must ask you to have no further intercourse with her. Perhaps at Williamsburg you will find a more congenial lodging while you are making your fortune."

My blood rushed to my face at the insult, and I could not trust myself to answer.

"Come, Dorothy," she continued, "you will go to your room," and she pushed her on before her.

I watched them until they turned into the other corridor, and then went slowly down the stairs. As I emerged upon the walk before the house, I saw a negro riding up, whom I recognized as one of Colonel Washington's servants. Some message for Dorothy from Betty Washington, no doubt, and I turned moodily back toward the stables to get out my horse, for I was determined to leave the place without delay. But I was arrested by the negro calling to me.

"What is it, Sam?" I asked, as he cantered up beside me.

"Lettah f'um Kuhnal Washin'ton, sah," he said, and handed me the missive.

I tore it open with a trembling hand.

DEAR TOM [it ran], — I have procured you an appointment as lieutenant in Captain Waggoner's company of Virginia troops, which are to make the campaign with General Braddock. They are now in barracks at Winchester, where you will join them as soon as possible.

Your friend, G. WASHINGTON.

"Sam," I said, "go back to the kitchen and tell Sukey to fill you up on the best she 's got," and I turned and ran into the house. I tapped at the door of my aunt's room, and her voice bade me enter.

"I have just received a note from Colonel Washington," I said, "in which he tells me that he has secured me a commission as lieutenant for the campaign, so I will not need to trespass on your hospitality longer than to-morrow morning."

There was a queer gleam in her eyes, which I thought I could read aright.

"Yes, there are many chances in war," I said bitterly, "and I am as like as another to fall."

"I am not quite so bloodthirsty as you seem to think," she answered coldly, "and perhaps a moment ago I spoke more harshly than I intended. Everything you need for the journey you will please ask for. I wish you every success."

"Thank you," I said, and left the room. My pack was soon made, for I had seen enough of frontier fighting to know no extra baggage would be permitted, and then I roamed up and down the house in hope of seeing Dorothy. But she was

nowhere visible, and at last I gave up the search and went to bed.

I was up long before daylight, donned my old uniform, saw my horse fed and saddled, ate my breakfast, and was ready to go. I took a last look around my room, picked up my pack, and started down the stairs.

"Tom," whispered a voice above me, and I looked up and saw her. "Quick, quick," she whispered, "say good-by."

"Oh, my love!" I cried, and I drew her lips down to mine.

"And you will not forget me, Tom?" she said. "I shall pray for you every night and morning till you come back to me. Good-by."

"Forget you, Dolly? Nay, that will never be." And as I rode away through the bleak, gray morning, the mist rolling up from hill and river disclosed a world of wondrous fairness.

Which brings me back again to the camp at Winchester, — but what a journey it has been! As I look back, nothing strikes me so greatly as the length of the way by which I have come. I had thought that some dozen pages at the most would suffice for my introduction, but memory has led my pen along many a by-path, and paused beside a score of half-forgotten landmarks. Well, as it was written, so let it stand, for my heart is in it.

CHAPTER XIII

LIEUTENANT ALLEN SHOWS HIS SKILL

THE days dragged on at Winchester, as days in camp will, and I accepted no more invitations to mess with the officers of the line. Indeed, I received none, and we provincial officers kept to ourselves. Major Washington had returned to Mount Vernon, but I found many of my old friends with the troops, so had no lack of company. There was Captain Waggoner, who had got his promotion eight months before, and Peyronie, recovered of his wound and eager for another bout with the French. He also had been promoted for his gallantry, and now had his own company of rangers. There was Captain Polson, for whom a tragic fate was waiting, and my old captain, Adam Stephen. And there was Carolus Spiltdorph, advanced to a lieutenancy like myself, and by great good fortune in my company. We began to chum together at once, — sharing our blankets and tobacco, — and continued so until the end.

Another friend I also found in young Harry Marsh, a son of Colonel Henry Marsh, who owned a plantation some eight or ten miles above the Frederick ferry, and a cousin of my aunt. Colonel Marsh had stopped one day at Riverview, while on

his way home from Hampton, and had made us all promise to return his visit, but so many affairs had intervened that the promise had never been kept. The boy, who was scarce nineteen, had secured a berth as ensign in Peyronie's company, and he came frequently with his captain to our quarters to listen with all his ears to our stories of the Fort Necessity affair. He was a fresh, whole-hearted fellow, and though he persisted in considering us all as little less than heroes, was himself heroic as any, as I was in the end to learn. We were a hearty and good-tempered company, and spent our evenings together most agreeably, discussing the campaign and the various small happenings of the camp. But as Spiltdorph shrewdly remarked, we were none of us so sanguinary as we had been a year before. I have since observed that the more a man sees of war, the less his eagerness for blood.

From Lieutenant Allen I kept aloof as much as possible, and he on his part took no notice whatever of me. Some rumor of my affair with him had got about the camp, but as neither of us would say a word concerning it, it was soon forgot in the press of greater matters. Whatever Allen's personal character may have been, it is not to be denied that he labored with us faithfully, though profanely, drilling us up and down the camp till we were near fainting in the broiling sun, or exercising us in arms for hours together, putting us through the same movement a hundred times, till we had done it to his satisfaction. We grumbled

of course, among ourselves, but at the end of another fortnight the result of his work began to be apparent, and Sir Peter Halket, when he inspected us just before starting for Fort Cumberland, as the fortification at Will's Creek was named, expressed himself well pleased with the progress we had made.

For the order to advance came at last, and after a two weeks' weary journey along the road which had been widened for the passage of wagons and artillery, we reached our destination and went into quarters there. The barracks were much better appointed than were the ones at Winchester, for this was to be the rendezvous of the entire force, and the independent companies which Colonel Washington had stationed here the previous summer had been at work all winter clearing the ground and building the fort. They had cleared a wide space in the forest, and on a little hill some two hundred yards from Will's Creek and four hundred from the Potomac, had erected the stockade. It was near two hundred yards in length from east to west, and some fifty in width, but rude enough, consisting merely of a row of logs set upright in the ground and projecting some twelve feet above it, loopholed, and sharpened at the top. There were embrasures for twelve cannon, ten of which, all four-pounders, were already mounted. Though frail as it could well be, it was deemed sufficient to withstand any attack likely to be brought against it. A great two-storied barrack for the officers of the line had been erected

within the stockade, and two magazines of heavy timber. The men were camped about the fort, and half a mile away through the forest a hundred Indians had pitched their wigwams. And here, on the tenth of May, came the Forty-Eighth under Colonel Dunbar, and General Braddock himself in his great traveling chariot, his staff riding behind and a body of light horse on either side. We were paraded to welcome him, the drums rolled out the grenadiers, the seventeen guns prescribed by the regulations were fired, and the campaign was on in earnest.

The morning of the next day, the general held his first levee in his tent, and all the officers called to pay their respects. He was a heavy-set, red-faced man of some sixty years, with long, straight nose, aggressive, pointed chin, and firm-set lips, and though he greeted us civilly enough, there was a touch of insolence in his manner which he made small effort to conceal, and which showed that it was not upon the Virginia troops he placed reliance. Still, there was that in his heavy-featured face and in his bearing which bespoke the soldier, and I remembered Fontenoy and the record he had made there. In the afternoon, there was a general review, and he rode up and down with his staff in front of the whole force, most gorgeous in gold lace and brilliant accoutrement. Of the twenty-two hundred men he looked at that day, the nine Virginia companies found least favor in his eyes, for he deemed them listless and mean-spirited, — an opinion which he was at no pains to

keep to himself, and which had the effect of making the bearing of his officers toward us even more insulting.

As we were drawn up there in line, the orders for the camp were published, the articles of war were read to us, and in the days that followed there was great show of discipline. But it was only show, for there was little real order, and even here on the edge of the settlements, the food was so bad and so scarce that foraging parties were sent to the neighboring plantations to seize what they could find, and a general market established in the camp. To encourage the people to bring in provisions, the price was raised a penny a pound, and any person who ventured to interfere with one bringing provisions, or offered to buy of him before he reached the public market, was to suffer death. These regulations produced some supplies, though very little when compared to our great needs.

A thing which encouraged me greatly to believe in the sagacity of our commander was the pains he took to engage the good offices of the Indians, — such of them, that is, as had not already been hopelessly estranged by the outrages committed upon them by traders and frontiersmen. Mr. Croghan, one of the best known of the traders, had brought some fifty warriors to the camp, together with their women and children, and on the morning of the twelfth, a congress was held at the general's tent to receive them. All the officers were there, and when the Indians were brought, the guard received them with firelocks rested.

There was great powwowing and smoking the pipe, and the general gave them a belt of wampum and many presents, and urged them to take up the hatchet against the French. This they agreed to do, and doubtless would have done, but for the conduct of some of the officers of the line.

The Indian camp, with its bark wigwams and tall totem pole, had become a great place of resort with certain of the officers. They had been attracted first by the dancing and queer customs of the savages, and had they come away when once their curiosity was satisfied, little harm had been done. Unfortunately, after looking at the men they looked at the women, and found some of them not unattractive. So, for want of something better to do, they set about debauching them, and succeeded so well that the warriors finally took their women away from the camp in disgust, and never again came near it. Other Indians appeared from time to time, but after begging all the rum and presents they could get, they left the camp and we never saw them again. Many of them were Delawares, doubtless sent as spies by the French. Another visitor was Captain Jack, the Black Rifle, known and feared by the Indians the whole length of the frontier. He had sworn undying vengeance against them, having come home to his cabin one night to find his wife and children butchered, and had roamed from the Carolinas to the Saint Lawrence, leaving a trail of Indian blood behind him. He would have made a most useful ally, but he took offense at

some fancied slight, and one day abruptly disappeared in the forest.

Never during all these weeks did the regulars get over their astonishment at sight of the tall warriors stalking through the camp, painted in red, yellow, and black, and greased from head to foot, their ears slit, their heads shaved save for the scalp-lock with its tuft of feathers; nor did they cease to wonder at their skill in throwing the tomahawk and shooting with the rifle, a skill of which we were to have abundant proof erelong.

It was not until four or five days after his arrival with General Braddock that I had opportunity to see Colonel Washington. I met him one evening as I was returning from guard duty, and I found him looking so pale and dispirited that I was startled.

"You are not ill?" I cried, as I grasped his hand.

"Ill rather in spirit than in body, Tom," he answered, with a smile. "Life in the general's tent is not a happy one. He has met with nothing but vexation, worry, and delay since he has been in the colony, and I believe he looks upon the country as void of honor and honesty. I try to show him that he has seen only the darker side, and we have frequent disputes, which sometimes wax very warm, for he is incapable of arguing without growing angry. Not that I blame him greatly," he added, with a sigh, "for the way the colonies have acted in this matter is inexcusable. Wagons, horses, and provisions which were promised us are

not forthcoming, and without them we are stalled here beyond hope of advance."

He passed his hand wearily before his eyes, and we walked some time in silence.

"'T is this delay which is ruining our great chance of success," he continued at last. "Could we have reached the fort before the French could reinforce it, the garrison must have deserted it or surrendered to us. But now they will have time to send whatever force they wish into the Ohio valley, and rouse all the Indian tribes for a hundred miles around. For with the Indians, the French have played a wiser part than the English, Tom, and have kept them ever their friends, while to-day we have not an Indian in the camp."

"They will return," I said. "They have all promised to return."

Washington shook his head.

"They will not return. Gist knows the Indians as few other white men do, and he assures me that they will not return."

"Well," I retorted hotly, "Indians or no Indians, the French cannot hope to resist successfully an army such as ours."

For a moment Washington said nothing.

"You must not think me a croaker, Tom," and he smiled down at me again, "but indeed I see many chances of failure. Even should we reach Fort Duquesne in safety, we will scarce be in condition to besiege it, unless the advance is conducted with rare skill and foresight."

I had nothing to say in answer, for in truth I

believed he was looking too much on the dark side, and yet did not like to tell him so.

"How do you find the general?" I asked.

"A proud, obstinate, brave man," he said, "who knows the science of war, perhaps, but who is ill fitted to cope with the difficulties he has met here and has still to meet. His great needs are patience and diplomacy and a knowledge of Indian warfare. I would he had been with us last year behind the walls of Fort Necessity."

"He has good advisers," I suggested. "Surely you can tell him what occurred that day."

But again Washington shook his head.

"My advice, such as I have ventured to give him, has been mostly thrown away. But his two other aides are good men, — Captain Orme and Captain Morris, — and may yet bring him to reason. The general's secretary, Mr. Shirley, is also an able man, but knows nothing of war. Indeed, he accepted the position to learn something of the art, but I fancy is disgusted with what knowledge he has already gained. As to the other officers, there is little to say. Some are capable, but most are merely insolent and ignorant, and all of them aim rather at displaying their own abilities than strengthening the hands of the general. In fact, Tom, I have regretted a score of times that I ever consented to make the campaign."

"But if you had not, where should I have been?" I protested.

"At least, you had been in no danger from Lieutenant Allen's sword," he laughed. "I have

heard many stories of his skill since I have been in camp, and perhaps it is as well he was in wine that night, and so not at his best. How has he used you since?"

"Why, in truth," I said, somewhat nettled at his reference to Allen's skill, "he has not so much as shown that he remembers me. But I shall remind him of our engagement once the campaign is ended, and shall ask my second to call upon him."

Washington laughed again, and I was glad to see that I had taken his mind off his own affairs.

"I shall be at your service then, Tom," he said. "Remember, he is one of the best swordsmen in the army, and you will do well to keep in practice. Do not grow over-confident;" and he bade me good-by and turned back to the general's quarters.

I thought his advice well given, and the very next day, to my great delight, found in Captain Polson's company John Langlade, the man of whom I had taken a dozen lessons at Williamsburg. He was very ready to accept the chance to add a few shillings to his pay, so for an hour every morning we exercised in a little open space behind the stockade. I soon found with great satisfaction that I could hold my own against him, though he was accounted a good swordsman, and he complimented me more than once on my strength of wrist and quickness of eye.

We were hard at it one morning, when I heard some one approaching, and, glancing around, saw that it was Lieutenant Allen. I flushed crimson

with chagrin, for that he guessed the reason of my diligence with the foils, I could not doubt. But I continued my play as though I had not seen him, and for some time he stood watching us with a dry smile.

"Very pretty," he said at last, as we stopped to breathe. "If all the Virginia troops would spend their mornings to such advantage, I should soon make soldiers of them despite themselves. Rapier play is most useful when one is going to fight the French, who are masters at it. I fear my own arm is growing rusty," he added carelessly. "Lend me your foil a moment, Lieutenant Stewart."

I handed it to him without a word, wondering what the man would be at. He took it nonchalantly, tested it, and turned to Langlade.

"Will you cross with me?" he said, and as Langlade nodded, he saluted and they engaged. Almost before the ring of the first parade had died away, Langlade's foil was flying through the air, and Allen was smiling blandly into his astonished face.

"An accident, I do not doubt," he said coolly. "Such accidents will happen sometimes. Will you try again?"

Langlade pressed his lips together, and without replying, picked up his foil. I saw him measure Allen with his eye, and then they engaged a second time. For a few moments, Allen contented himself with standing on the defensive, parrying Langlade's savage thrusts with a coolness which nothing could shake and an art that was consum-

mate. Then he bent to the attack, and touched his adversary on breast and arm and thigh, his point reaching its mark with ease and seeming slowness.

"Really, I must go," he said at length. "The bout has done me a world of good. I trust you will profit by the lesson, Lieutenant Stewart," and he handed me back my foil, smiled full into my eyes, and walked away.

We both stared after him, until he turned the corner and was out of sight.

"He 's the devil himself," gasped Langlade, as our eyes met. "I have never felt such a wrist. Did you see how he disarmed me? 'T was no accident. My fingers would have broken in an instant more, had I not let go the foil. Who is he?"

"Lieutenant Allen, of the Forty-Fourth," I answered as carelessly as I could.

Langlade fell silent a moment.

"I have heard of him," he said at last. "I do not wonder he disarmed me. 'T was he who met the Comte d'Artois, the finest swordsman in the French Guards, in a little wood on the border of Holland, one morning, over some affair of honor. They had agreed that it should be to the death."

"And what was the result?" I questioned, looking out over the camp as though little interested in the answer.

"Can you doubt?" asked Langlade. "Allen returned to England without a scratch, and his opponent was carried back to Paris with a sword-thrust through his heart, and buried beside his

royal relatives at Saint Denis. I pity any man who is called upon to face him. He has need to be a master."

I nodded gloomily, put up the foils, and returned to my quarters, for I was in no mood for further exercise that morning. What Allen had meant by his last remark I could not doubt. The lesson I was to profit by was that I should stand no chance against him.

CHAPTER XIV

I CHANCE UPON A TRAGEDY

As the first weeks of May passed, we slowly got into shape for the advance, and I began to realize the magnitude of the task before us. Our march to Great Meadows the year before, arduous as it had been, was mere child's play to this, and I did not wonder that on every hand the general found himself confronting obstacles well-nigh insurmountable. And each day, as though to cover other defects, the discipline grew more exacting. Arms were constantly inspected and overhauled; roll was called morning, noon, and night; each regiment attended divine service around the colors every Sabbath, though neither officers nor men got much good from it that I could see; guard mount occurred each morning at eight o'clock; every man was supplied with twenty-four rounds and extra flints, and also a new shirt, a new pair of stockings and of shoes, and Osnabrig waistcoats and breeches, the heat making the others insupportable, and with bladders for their hats.

On the sixteenth, Colonel Gage, with two companies of the Forty-Fourth and the last division of the train, toiled into camp, very weary and travel-stained, and on this day, too, was the first death

among the officers, Captain Bromley, of Sir Peter Halket's, succumbing to dysentery. Two days later, we all attended his funeral, and a most impressive sight it was. A captain's guard marched before the coffin, their firelocks reversed, and the drums beating the dead march. At the grave the guard formed on either side, and the coffin, with sword and sash upon it, was carried in between and lowered into place. The service was read by Chaplain Hughes, of the Forty-Fourth, the guard fired three volleys over the grave, and we returned to quarters.

There was a great demonstration next day to impress some Indians that had come into camp. All the guns were fired, and drums and fifes were set to beating and playing the point-of-war, and then four or five companies of regulars were put through their manœuvres. The Indians were vastly astonished at seeing them move together as one man, and even to us provincials it was a thrilling and impressive sight. And on the twentieth happened one of the pleasantest incidents of the whole campaign.

The great difficulty which confronted our commander from the first was the lack of means of transport. Of the three thousand horses and three hundred wagons promised from the colonies, only two hundred horses and twenty wagons were forthcoming, so that for a time it seemed that the expedition must be abandoned. Small wonder the general raved and swore at provincial perfidy and turpitude, the more so when it was discovered that

a great part of the provision furnished for the army was utterly worthless, and the two hundred horses scarce able to stand upon their feet.

Let me say here that I believe this purblind policy of delaying the expedition instead of freely aiding it had much to do with the result. Virginia did her part with some degree of willingness, but Pennsylvania, whence the general expected to draw a great part of his transport and provision, would do nothing. The Assembly spent its time bickering with the governor, and when asked to contribute toward its own defense, made the astounding statement that "they had rather the French should conquer them than give up their privileges." Some of them even asserted that there were no French, but that the whole affair was a scheme of the politicians, and acted, to use Dinwiddie's words, as though they had given their senses a long holiday.

Yet, strangely enough, it was from a Pennsylvanian that aid came at last, for just when matters were at their worst and the general in despair, there came to his quarters at Frederick a very famous gentleman, — more famous still in the troublous times which are upon us now, — Mr. Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, director of posts in the colonies and sometime printer of "Poor Richard." The general received him as his merit warranted, and explained to him our difficulties. Mr. Franklin, as Colonel Washington told me afterward, listened to it all with close attention, putting in a keen question now and then, and at the end said he believed he could secure us horses

and wagons from his friends among the Pennsylvania Dutch, who were ever ready to turn an honest penny. So he wrote them a diplomatic letter, and the result was that, beside near a hundred furnished earlier, there came to us at Cumberland on the twentieth above eighty wagons, each with four horses, and the general declared Mr. Franklin the only honest man he had met in America. We, too, had cause to remember him, for all the officers were summoned to the general's tent, and there was distributed to each of us a package containing a generous supply of sugar, tea, coffee, chocolate, cheese, butter, wine, spirits, hams, tongues, rice, and raisins, the gift of Mr. Franklin and the Philadelphia Assembly.

There was high carnival in our tent that night, as you may well believe. We were all there, all who had been present at Fort Necessity, and not since the campaign opened had we sat down to such a feast. And when the plates were cleared away and only the pipes and wine remained, Peyronie sang us a song in French, and Spiltdorph one in German, and Polson one in Gaelic, and old Christopher Gist, who stuck in his head to see what was toward, was pressed to pay for his entertainment by giving us a Cherokee war-song, which he did with much fire and spirit. We sat long into the night talking of the past and of the future, and of the great things we were going to accomplish. Nor did we forget to draft a letter of most hearty thanks to Mr. Franklin, which was sent him, together with many others, among them one from Sir Peter Halket himself.

The arrival of the wagons had done much to solve the problem of transport, and on the next day preparations for the advance began in earnest. The whole force of carpenters was put to work building a bridge across the creek, the smiths sharpened the axes, and the bakers baked a prodigious number of little biscuits for us to carry on the march. Two hundred pioneers were sent out to cut the road, and from one end of the camp to the other was the stir of preparation.

So two days passed, and on the afternoon of the twenty-fourth, Spiltdorph and myself crossed the creek on the bridge, which was well-nigh completed, and walked on into the forest to see what progress the pioneers were making. We each took a firelock with us in hope of knocking over some game for supper, to help out our dwindling larder. We found that the pioneers had cut a road twelve feet wide some two miles into the forest. It was a mere tunnel between the trees, whose branches overtopped it with a roof of green, but it had been leveled with great care, — more care than I thought necessary, — and would give smooth going to the wagons and artillery. We reached the end of the road, where the axemen were laboring faithfully, and after watching them for a time, were turning back to camp, when Spiltdorph called my attention to the peculiar appearance of the ground about us. We were in the midst of a grove of chestnuts, and the leaves beneath them for rods around had been turned over and the earth freshly raked up.

"What under heaven could have caused that?" asked Spiltdorph.

"Wild turkeys," I answered quickly, for I had often seen the like under beeches and oaks as well as chestnuts. "Come on," I added, "perhaps they are not far away."

"All right," said Spiltdorph, "a wild turkey would go exceeding well on our table;" and he followed me into the forest. The turkeys had evidently been frightened away by the approach of the pioneers, and had stopped here and there to hunt for food, so that their track was easily followed. I judged they could not be far away, and was looking every moment to see their blue heads bobbing about among the underbrush, when I heard a sharp fusilade of shots ahead.

"Somebody 's found 'em!" I cried. "Come on. Perhaps we can get some yet."

We tore through a bit of marshy ground, up a slight hill, and came suddenly to the edge of a little clearing. One glance into it sent me headlong behind a bush, and I tripped up Spiltdorph beside me.

"Good God, man!" he cried, but I had my hand over his mouth before he could say more.

"Be still," I whispered "an you value your life. Look over there."

He peered around the bush and saw what I had seen, a dozen Indians in full war paint busily engaged in setting fire to a log cabin which stood in the middle of the clearing. They were going about the task in unwonted silence, doubtless because of the nearness of our troops, and a half dozen bodies, two of women and four of children,

scattered on the ground before the door, showed how completely they had done their work. Even as we looked, two of them picked up the body of one of the women and threw it into the burning house.

"The devils!" groaned Spiltdorph. "Oh, the devils!" and I felt my own blood boiling in my veins.

"Come, we must do something!" I said. "We can kill two of them and reload and kill two more before they can reach us. They will not dare pursue us far toward the camp, and may even run at the first fire."

"Good!" said Spiltdorph, between his teeth. "Pick your man;" but before I could reply he had jerked his musket to his shoulder with a cry of rage and fired. An Indian had picked up one of the children, which must have been only wounded, since it was crying lustily, and was just about to pitch it on the fire, when Spiltdorph's bullet caught him full in the breast. He threw up his hands and fell like a log, the child under him. Quick as a flash, I fired and brought down another. For an instant the Indians stood dazed at the suddenness of the attack, and then with a yell they broke for the other side of the clearing. Spiltdorph would have started down toward the house, but I held him back.

"Not yet," I said. "They will stop so soon as they get to cover. Wait a bit."

We waited for half an hour, watching the smoke curling over the house, and then, judging

that the Indians had made off for fear of being ambushed, we crossed the clearing. It took but a glance to read the story. The women had been washing by the little brook before the cabin, with the children playing about them, when the Indians had come up and with a single volley killed them all except the child we had heard crying. They had swooped down upon their victims, torn the scalps from their heads, looted the house, and set fire to it. We dragged out the body of the woman which had been thrown within, in the hope that a spark of life might yet remain, but she was quite dead. Beneath the warrior Spiltdorph had shot we found the child. It was a boy of some six or seven years, and so covered with blood that it seemed it must be dead. But we stripped it and washed it in the brook, and found no wounds upon it except in the head, where it had been struck with a hatchet before its scalp had been stripped off. The cold water brought it back to life and it began to cry again, whereat Spiltdorph took off his coat and wrapped it tenderly about it.

We washed the blood from the faces of the women and stood for a long time looking down at them. They were both comely, the younger just at the dawn of womanhood. They must have been talking merrily together, for their faces were smiling as they had been in life.

As I stood looking so, I was startled by a kind of dry sobbing at my elbow, and turned with a jerk to find a man standing there. He was leaning on his rifle, gazing down at the dead, with no

sound but the choking in his throat. A brace of turkeys over his shoulder showed that he had been hunting. In an instant I understood. It was the husband and father come home. He did not move as I looked at him nor raise his eyes, but stood transfixed under his agony. I glanced across at Spiltdorph, and saw that his eyes were wet and his lips quivering. I did not venture to speak, but my friend, who was ever more tactful than I, moved to the man's side and placed his hand gently on his shoulder.

"They died an easy death," he said softly. "See, they are still smiling. They had no fear, no agony. They were dead before they knew that danger threatened. Let us thank God that they suffered no worse."

The man breathed a long sigh and his strength seemed to go suddenly from him, for he dropped his rifle and fell upon his knees.

"This was my wife," he whispered. "This was my sister. These were my children. What is there left on earth for me?"

I no longer sought to control the working of my face, and the tears were streaming down Spiltdorph's cheeks. Great, gentle, manly heart, how I loved you!

"Yes, there is something!" cried the man, and he sprang to his feet and seized his gun. "There is vengeance! Friends, will you help me bury my dead?"

"Yes, we will help," I said. He brought a spade and hoe from a little hut near the stream,

and we dug a broad and shallow trench and laid the bodies in it.

"There is one missing," said the man, looking about him. "Where is he?"

"He is here," said Spiltdorph, opening his coat. "He is not dead. He may yet live."

The father looked at the boy a moment, then fell on his knees and kissed him.

"Thank God!" he cried, and the tears burst forth. We waited in silence until the storm of grief was past. At last he wrapped the coat about the child again, and came to us where we stood beside the grave.

"Friends," he said, "does either of you know the burial service? These were virtuous and Christian women, and would wish a Christian burial."

Spiltdorph sadly shook his head, and the man turned to me. Could I do it? I trembled at the thought. Yet how could I refuse?

"I know the service," I said, and took my place at the head of the grave.

The mists of evening were stealing up from the forest about us, and there was no sound save the plashing of the brook over the stones at our feet. Then it all faded from before me and I was standing again in a willow grove with an open grave afar off.

"'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord.'" It was not my voice, but another ringing up to heaven from beside me. And the voice kept on and on until the last amen.

We filled in the shallow grave and covered it with logs and rocks. Night was at hand before we finished.

"You must come with us," said Spiltdorph to the stranger. "The doctor at the fort will do what he can for the child. If you still think of vengeance, you can march with us against the Indians and the French who set them on."

He made a gesture of assent, and we set off through the forest.

"Stewart," asked Spiltdorph, in a low voice, after we had walked some time in silence, "how does it happen you knew the burial service?"

"I have read it many times in the prayer-book," I answered simply. "Moreover, I heard it one morning beside my mother's grave, and again beside my grandfather's. I am not like to forget it."

He walked on for a moment, and then came close to me and caught my hand in his.

"Forgive me," he said softly. "You have done a good and generous thing. I can judge how much it cost you," and we said no more until we reached the fort.

The news that the Indians had pushed hostilities so near the camp created no little uproar, and a party was sent out at daybreak to scour the woods and endeavor to teach the marauders a lesson, but they returned toward evening without discovering a trace of them, and it was believed they had made off to Fort Duquesne. The Indians whom we had killed were recognized as two of a party of Delawares who had been in

camp a few days before, and who, it was now certain, had been sent as spies by the French and to do us what harm they could. Wherefore it was ordered that no more Delawares should be suffered to enter the camp.

We turned the child over to Doctor Craik, and took the man, whose name, it seemed, was Nicholas Stith, to our tent with us, where we gave him meat and drink, and did what we could to take his mind from his misfortune. He remained with us some days, until his child died, as it did at last, and then, finding our advance too slow to keep pace with his passion for revenge, secured a store of ball and powder from the magazine, slung his rifle across his back, and disappeared into the forest.

In the mean time our preparations had been hurried on apace. It was no light task to cut a road through near a hundred and fifty miles of virgin forest, over two great mountain ranges and across innumerable streams, nor was it lightly undertaken. Captain Waggoner brought with him to table one night a copy of the orders for the march and for encampment, which were adhered to with few changes during the whole advance, and we discussed them thoroughly when the meal was finished, nor could we discover in them much to criticise.

It was ordered that, to protect the baggage from Indian surprise and insult, scouting parties were to be thrown well out upon the flanks and in front and rear, and every commanding officer of a company was directed to detach always upon his flanks

a third of his men under command of a sergeant, the sergeant in turn to detach upon his flanks a third of his men under command of a corporal, these outparties to be relieved every night at retreat beating, and to form the advanced pickets. The wagons, artillery, and pack-horses were formed into three divisions, and the provisions so distributed that each division was to be victualed from the part of the line it covered, and a commissary was appointed for each. The companies were to march two deep, that they might cover the line more effectively. Sir Peter Halket was to lead the column and Colonel Dunbar bring up the rear. An advance party of three hundred men was to precede the column and clear the road.

The form of encampment differed little from that of march. The wagons were to be drawn up in close order, the companies to face out, the flanking parties to clear away the underbrush and saplings, half the company remaining under arms the while, and finally a chain of sentries was to be posted round the camp. Sir Peter Halket, with the Forty-Fourth, was to march with the first division ; Lieutenant-Colonel Burton with the independent companies, provincials, and artillery, was to form the second ; and Colonel Dunbar, with the Forty-Eighth, the third.

I confess that when I had become acquainted with these orders, they seemed to me most soldier-like. A copy of them lies before me now, and even at this day, when I scan again the plan of march, I do not see how it could be improved. I

admit that there are others who know much more of the art of war than I, and to them defects in the system may be at once discernible. But at the time, these orders gave us all a most exalted opinion of our general's ability, and I remembered with a smile the gloomy prophecies of Colonel Washington. Surely, against such a force, so ably handled, no army the French might muster could avail, and I awaited the event with a confidence and eager anticipation which were shared by all the others.

CHAPTER XV

WE START ON A WEARY JOURNEY

THE twenty-ninth of May dawned clear and bright in pleasant contrast to the violent storm which had raged the day before. Long ere daybreak, the camp was alive with hurrying men, for the first detachment was to march under command of Major Campbell, and the sun had scarce risen above the horizon when the gates were thrown open and the troops filed out. Six hundred of them there were, with two fieldpieces and fifty wagons of provision, and very smart they looked as they fell into rank beyond the bridge and set off westward. The whole camp was there to see them go, and cheered them right heartily, for we were all of us glad that the long waiting and delay had come to an end at last.

All day we could see them here and there in the intervales of the forest pushing their way up a steep hill not two miles from the camp, and darkness came before they passed the summit. Three wagons were utterly destroyed in the passage, and new ones had to be sent from camp to replace them, while many more were all but ruined. Spiltdorph and I walked out to the place the next day and found it an almost perpendicular rock,

though two hundred men and a company of miners had been at work for near a week trying to make it passable. We could see the detachment slowly cutting its way through the valley below, and I reflected gloomily that, at so slow a rate, the summer would be well-nigh gone before the army could reach its destination. Indeed, I believe it would have gone to pieces on this first spur of the Alleghanies, had not Lieutenant Spendelow, of the seamen, discovered a valley round its foot. Accordingly, a party of a hundred men was ordered out to clear a road there, and worked to such purpose that at the end of two days an extremely good one was completed, falling into the road made by Major Campbell about a mile beyond the mountain.

On the seventh, Sir Peter Halket and the Forty-Eighth marched, in the midst of a heavy storm, and at daybreak the next day it was our turn. Under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Burton, all of the independent companies and rangers left the camp, not, indeed, making so brilliant an appearance as the regulars, — who stood on either side and laughed at us, — but with a clearer comprehension of the work before us and a hearty readiness to do it. It was not until the tenth that the third division under Colonel Dunbar left the fort, and finally, on the eleventh, the general joined the army where it had assembled at Spendelow camp, five miles from the start.

Our tent that night was a gloomy place, for I think most of us, for the first time since the cam-

paign opened, began to doubt its ultimate success. We soon finished with the food, and were smoking in gloomy silence, when Peyronie came in, and after a glance around at our faces, broke into a laugh.

"Ma foi!" he cried, "I thought I had chanced upon a meeting of our Philadelphia friends, — they of the broad hats and sober coats, — and yet I had never before known them to go to war."

"Do you call this going to war?" cried Waggoner. "I 'm cursed if I do!"

Peyronie laughed louder than ever, and Waggoner motioned him to the pipes and tobacco.

"By God, Peyronie!" he said. "I believe you would laugh in the face of the devil."

Peyronie filled his pipe, chuckling to himself the while, and when he had got it to drawing nicely, settled himself upon a stool.

"Why, to tell the truth," said he, "I was feeling sober enough myself till I came in here, but the sight of you fellows sitting around for all the world like death-heads at an Egyptian feast was too much for me. And then," he added, "I have always found it better to laugh than to cry."

Waggoner looked at him with a grim smile, and there was a gleam in Spiltdorph's eyes, though he tried to conceal himself behind a cloud of smoke. Peyronie's good humor was infectious.

"Let me see," continued the Frenchman, "when was it the first detachment left the fort?"

"The twenty-ninth of May," answered Waggoner shortly.

"And what day is this?"

"The eleventh of June."

"And how far have we come?"

"Five miles!" cried Waggoner. "Damn it, man, you know all this well enough! Don't make me say it! It 's incredible! Five miles in thirteen days! Think of it!"

I heard Spiltdorph choking behind his cloud of smoke.

"Oh, come," said Peyronie, "that 's not the way to look at it. Consider a moment. It is one hundred and fifty miles to Fort Duquesne, so I am told. At five-thirteenths of a mile a day, we shall arrive there nicely in — in — let me see."

"In three hundred and ninety days!" cried Spiltdorph.

"Thank you, lieutenant," and Peyronie bowed toward Spiltdorph's nimbus. "I was never good at figures. In three hundred and ninety days, then. You see, we shall get to Fort Duquesne very comfortably by the middle of July of next year. Perhaps the French will have grown weary of waiting for us by that time, and we shall have only to march in and occupy the fort."

Waggoner snorted with anger.

"Come, talk sense, Peyronie," he said. "What 's to be done?"

Peyronie smiled more blandly than ever.

"I fancy that is just what 's troubling the general," he remarked. "I met Colonel Washington a moment ago looking like a thunder-cloud, and he said a council of war had been called at the general's tent."

"There was need of it," and Waggoner's brow cleared a little. "What think you they will do?"

"Well," said Peyronie deliberately, "if it were left to me, the first thing I should do would be to cut down Spiltdorph's supply of tobacco and take away from him that great porcelain pipe, which must weigh two or three pounds."

"I should like to see you do it," grunted Spiltdorph, and he took his pipe from his lips to look at it lovingly. "Why, man, that pipe has been in the family for half a dozen generations. There's only one other like it in Germany."

"A most fortunate thing," remarked Peyronie dryly; "else Virginia could not raise enough tobacco to supply the market. But, seriously, I believe even the general will see the need of taking some radical action. He may even be induced to leave behind one or two of his women and a few cases of wine, if the matter be put before him plainly."

"Shut up, man!" cried Waggoner. "Do you want a court-martial?" And we fell silent, for indeed the excesses of the officers of the line was a sore subject with all of us. But Peyronie had made a good guess, as we found out when the result of the council was made known next day.

It was pointed out that we had less than half the horses we really needed, and those we had were so weak from the diet of leaves to which they had been reduced that they could do little work. So the general urged that all unnecessary baggage be sent back to the fort, and that as many horses

as possible be given to the public cause. He and his staff set the example by contributing twenty horses, and this had so great effect among the officers that near a hundred were added to the train. They divested themselves, also, of all the baggage they did not need, most of them even sending back their tents, and sharing the soldiers' tents for the remainder of the campaign. Enough powder and stores were left behind to clear twenty wagons, and all the king's wagons were returned to the fort as being too heavy. A deprivation which, I doubt not, cost some of the officers more than any other, was that of their women, who were ordered back to the fort, and only two women for each company were allowed to be victualed upon the march, but in this particular the example set by the general was not so commendable as in the matter of the horses. Three hundred lashes were ordered to any soldier or non-commissioned officer who should be caught gaming or seen drunk in camp, but these rigors did not affect those higher up, and the officers still spent half the night over the cards or dice, and on such occasions there was much wine and spirits drunk.

We of Waggoner's and Peyronie's companies fared very well, for though we gave up one of our tents, it was only to bunk together in the other. There was no room to spare, to be sure, and Peyronie grumbled that every time a man turned over he disturbed the whole line of sleepers, but we put the best face possible on the situation, and had little cause for complaint, except at the food,

which soon became most villainous. I think Spiltdorph had some twinges concerning his pipe, for he was a conscientious fellow, but he could not decide to give it up, and finally kept it with him, arguing artfully that without it he must inevitably fall ill, and so be of no use whatever. Dear fellow, I wonder what warrior, the envy of his tribe, smokes it now in his wigwam beside the Miami?

It took two days to repair our wagons and get our baggage readjusted, and finally, on the thirteenth, the army set in motion again, winding along the narrow road through the forest like some gigantic, parti-colored serpent, with strength barely sufficient to drag its great length along. It was noon of the next day before we reached Martin's plantation, scarce five miles away. Yet here we had to stay another day, so nearly were the horses spent, but at daybreak on the fifteenth the line moved again, and we toiled up an extremely steep ascent for more than two miles. The horses were quite unable to proceed, so half the troops were ordered to ground arms and assist the wagons. It was weary work, nor was the descent less perilous, and three of the wagons got beyond control and were dashed to pieces at the bottom. So we struggled on over hills and through valleys, until on the eighteenth we reached the Little Meadows. Here the army was well-nigh stalled. The horses had grown every day weaker, and many of them were already dead. Nor were the men in much better case, so excessive had been the fatigues of the

journey, for on many days they had been under arms from sunrise till late into the night.

It was here, for the first time since our departure from Fort Cumberland, that I chanced to see Colonel Washington, and I was shocked at the change in his appearance. He was wan and livid, and seemed to have fallen away greatly in flesh. To my startled inquiry, he replied that he had not been able to shake off the fever, which had grown worse instead of better.

"But I will conquer it," he said, with a smile. "I cannot afford to miss the end. From here, I believe our advance will be more rapid, for the general has decided that he will leave his baggage and push on with a picked body of the troops to meet the enemy."

I was rejoiced to hear it, though I did not learn until long afterwards that it was by Colonel Washington's advice that this plan was adopted. A detachment of four hundred men was sent out to cut a road to the little crossing of the Yoxiogeny, and on the next day the general himself followed with about nine hundred men, the pick of the whole command. The Virginia companies were yet in fair condition, but the regulars had been decimated by disease. Yet though our baggage was now reduced to thirty wagons and our artillery to four howitzers and four twelve-pounders, we seemed to have lost the power of motion, for we were four days in getting twelve miles. Still, we were nearing Fort Duquesne, and the Indians, set on by the French, began to harass us, and killed

and scalped a straggler now and then, always evading pursuit. On the evening of the nineteenth, the guides reported that a great body of the enemy was advancing to attack us, but they did not appear, though we remained for two hours under arms, anxiously awaiting the event. From that time on, the Indians hung upon our flanks, but vanished as by magic the moment we advanced against them.

In consequence of these alarms, more stringent orders were issued to the camp. On no account was a gun to be discharged unless at an enemy, the pickets were always to load afresh when going on duty, and at daybreak to examine their pans and put in fresh priming, and a reward of five pounds was offered for every Indian scalp. Day after day we plodded on, and it was not until the twenty-fifth of June that we reached the Great Meadows.

I surveyed with a melancholy interest the trenches of Fort Necessity, which were yet clearly to be seen on the plain. Our detachment halted here for a space, and it was while I was walking up and down along the remnants of the old breastwork that I saw an officer ride up, spring from his horse, and spend some minutes in a keen inspection of the fortification. As he looked about him, he perceived me similarly engaged, and, after a moment's hesitation, turned toward me. He made a brave figure in his three-cornered hat, scarlet coat, and ample waistcoat, all heavy with gold lace. His face was pale as from much loss of sleep, but very

pleasing, and as he stopped before me, I saw that his eyes were of a clear and penetrating blue.

"This is the place, is it not," he asked, "where Colonel Washington made his gallant stand against the French and Indians last year?"

"This is indeed the place, sir," I answered, my face flushing; "and it warms my heart to know that you deem the action a gallant one."

"No man could do less," he said quickly. "He held off four times his number, and at the end marched out with colors flying. I know many a general who would have been glad to do so well. Do I guess aright," he added, with a smile, "when I venture to say that you were present with him?"

"It was my great good fortune," I answered simply, but with a pride I did not try to conceal.

"Let me introduce myself," he said, looking at me with greater interest. "I am Captain Robert Orme, of General Braddock's staff, and I have come to admire Colonel Washington very greatly during the month that we have been associated."

"And I," I said, "am Lieutenant Thomas Stewart, of Captain Waggoner's Virginia Company."

"Lieutenant Stewart!" he cried, and his hand was clasping mine warmly. "I am happy to meet you. Colonel Washington has told me of the part you played."

"Not more happy than am I, captain, I am sure," I answered heartily. "Colonel Washington

has spoken to me of you and in terms of warmest praise."

"Now 't is my turn to blush!" he cried, laughing, and looking at my cheeks which had turned red a moment before, "but my blood has been so spent in this horrible march that I have n't a blush remaining."

"And how is Colonel Washington?" I questioned, glad to change the subject. "The last I saw him, he seemed most ill."

Captain Orme looked at me quickly.

"Have you not heard?" he asked, and his face was very grave.

"I have heard nothing, sir," I answered, with a sinking heart. "Pray tell me."

"Colonel Washington has been ill almost from the first. His indomitable will kept him on horseback when he should have been in bed. At last, when the fever had wasted him to a mere skeleton, and he spent his nights in sleepless delirium, he broke down utterly. His body was no longer able to obey his will. At the ford of the Yoxiogeny he attempted to mount his horse and fell in a faint. He was carried to a tent and left with two or three guards. So soon as he recovered consciousness, he tried to get up to follow us, and was persuaded to lie still only when the general promised he would send for him in order that he might be present when we meet the French. He is a man who is an honor to Virginia," concluded Orme, and he turned away hastily to hide his emotion, nor were my own eyes wholly dry.

"Come," I said, "let me show you, sir, how the troops lay that day," and as he assented, I led the way along the lines and pointed out the position held by the enemy and how we had opposed them; but my thoughts were miles away with that wasted figure tossing wearily from side to side of a rude camp cot on the bank of the Yoxiogeny, with no other nurses than two or three rough soldiers.

"'T was well done," said Orme, when I had finished. "I see not how it could have been better. And I trust the victory will be with us, not with the French, when we meet before Duquesne."

"Of that there can be no question!" I cried. "Once we reach the fort, it must fall before us."

"Faith, I believe so," laughed Orme. "My only fear is that they will run away, and not stay to give us battle. Our spies have told us that such was their intention," and he laughed again as he saw my fallen face. "Why, I believe you are as great a fire-eater as the best of us, lieutenant."

"In truth, sir," I answered, somewhat abashed at his merriment, "I decided long ago that since I held no station in the world, I needs must win one with my sword, but if I can find no employment for it, I see small hope of advancement."

"Well, do not repine," and he smiled as he shook my hand, "for if the French do not wait to meet us here, we shall yet find plenty of fighting before us. This is only the first stage in the journey, and Duquesne once ours, we press forward to join forces with the expeditions which are moving

against Canada. If I hear more from Colonel Washington, I shall let you know."

I thanked him for his kindness, and watched him as he rode away across the plain. When he was out of sight, I turned back to join my company, and I felt that I had made a new friend, and one whom I was proud to have.

CHAPTER XVI

THE END IN SIGHT

THE country beyond Great Meadows was exceeding mountainous, and we could proceed only a few miles each day, and that with the greatest difficulty. The horses were by this time well-nigh useless, and at every little hill half the men were compelled to ground arms and take a hand at the wagons. It was work fatiguing beyond description, and our sick list grew larger every day, while those who remained upon their feet were in scarce better plight.

On the evening of the twenty-sixth, we reached the pass through which had come the party of French and Indians to attack us at Fort Necessity. They must have thought for a time to oppose us here, for we came upon traces of a camp just broken up, with embers still glowing in the hollow, over which they had prepared their food. Both French and Indians had been present, for the former had written on the trees many insolent and scurrilous expressions, — which gave me a poorer opinion of them than I had yet entertained, — and the Indians had marked up the number of scalps they had taken, some eight or ten in all. Whatever their intention may have been, the sight of

our strength had frightened them away, and we saw no sign of them as we descended into the valley on the other side.

We toiled on all the next day over a road that was painfully familiar to most of us, and in the evening came to Christopher Gist's plantation. Spiltdorph and I made a circuit of the place that night, and I pointed out to him the dispositions we had made for defense the year before. The French had burned down all the buildings, but the half-finished trenches could yet be seen, and the logs which were to have made the breastwork still littered the ground.

Beyond Gist's, it was a new country to all of us, and grew more open, so that we could make longer marches. We descended a broad valley to the great crossing of the Yoxiogeny, which we passed on the thirtieth. The general was under much apprehension lest the French ambush us here, and so advanced most cautiously, but we saw no sign of any enemy. Beyond the river was a great swamp, where a road of logs had to be built to support the wagons and artillery, but we won through without accident, and two days later reached a place called Jacob's cabin, not above thirty miles, as the bird flies, from Fort Duquesne. Here the rumor ran through the camp that we were to be held till Colonel Dunbar's division could be brought up from the Little Meadows, and there was much savage comment at our mess that evening.

"Why," cried Peyronie, who voiced the senti-

ment of all of us, "'t would take two weeks or more to bring Dunbar up, and what are we to do meantime? Sit here and eat this carrion?" and he looked disgustedly at the mess of unsavory beef on the table, which was, to tell the truth, most odoriferous. "'T is rank folly to even think of such a course."

"So the general believes," said a pleasant voice, and I turned with a start to see a gallant figure standing by the raised flap of the tent.

"Captain Orme!" I cried, springing to my feet, and I brought him in and presented him to all the others. We pressed him to sit down, and though he laughingly declined to partake of our rations, against which, he said, Peyronie's remark had somehow prejudiced him, he consented to join us in a glass of wine, — where Waggoner found the bottle I could never guess, — in which we pledged the success of the campaign.

"So we are not to stop here?" asked Peyronie, when the toast was drunk.

"No," and Orme set down the glass. "The suggestion was made by Sir John St. Clair, and a council was held half an hour since to consider it. It was agreed without debate that we could not afford the delay, as the provision is running low, and so we shall press on at once."

"'T is the wiser course," said Waggoner. "We have men in plenty."

"So the general thinks," said Orme. "He has learned that there is only a small garrison at the fort, which can scarce hope to resist us. But 't was

not to talk of the campaign I came here. I had a note this evening from Colonel Washington, which I knew Lieutenant Stewart would wish to see."

"Oh, yes!" I cried. "What says he, sir?"

Orme glanced about at the circle of attentive faces.

"I see Colonel Washington has many friends here," he said, with a smile. "He writes that he is improving, and hopes soon to join us, and implores me not to neglect to warn him so that he can be present when we meet the French. I shall not neglect it," he added.

"Captain Orme," said Peyronie, after a moment, "I am sure I speak for all these gentlemen when I say we deeply appreciate your kindness in coming here to-night. There is not one of us who does not love Colonel Washington. We thank you, sir," and Peyronie bowed with a grace worthy of Versailles.

"Nay," protested Orme, bowing in his turn, "it was a little thing. I, too, think much of Colonel Washington. Good-evening, gentlemen," and we all arose and saluted him, remaining standing till he was out of sight.

"A gentleman and a soldier, if ever I saw one!" cried Peyronie. "A man whom it is a privilege to know." And we all of us echoed the sentiment.

So, the next morning, the order was given to march as usual, and we made about five miles to a salt lick in the marsh, where we camped for the night. The next day we reached a little stream called Thicketty Run, and here there was a longer

halt, until we could gain some further information of the enemy. Christopher Gist, by dint of many gifts and much persuasion, had secured the services of eight Iroquois, lazy dogs, who up to the present time had done little but eat and sleep. But we were now so near the enemy that it was imperative to reconnoitre their position, so, after much trouble, two of the Indians were induced to go forward, and Gist himself was sent after them to see that they really did approach the fort and not try to deceive us. This was the fourth of July, just one year since we had marched away from Fort Necessity. All the next day we remained at Thicketty Run, waiting for the scouts to come in, but they did not appear until the sixth.

The Indians returned early in the morning, bringing with them the scalp of a French officer they had killed near the fort, and stated that they had seen none of the enemy except the one they had shot, and that the French possessed no pass between us and Duquesne, and had seemingly made no preparation to resist us. Gist got back later in the day, having narrowly escaped capture by two Delawares, and confirmed this story. Such carelessness on the part of the French seemed incredible, as the country was very favorable to an ambuscade, and the officers were almost unanimously of the opinion that it was their purpose to abandon the fort at our approach.

These reports once received, we again broke camp and advanced toward the Monongahela. An unhappy accident marked the day. Three or four

men who had loitered behind were surprised by some Indians, and killed and scalped, before assistance could be sent them. This so excited our scouting parties that they fired upon a body of our own Indians, notwithstanding the fact that they made the preconcerted signal by holding up a green bough and grounding arms. The son of Chief Monakatuca was killed by the discharge, and it was feared for a time that the Indians would leave in a body. But the general sent for them, condoled with them and made them presents, ordered that Monakatuca's son be given a military burial, and, in a word, handled them so adroitly that they became more attached to us than ever. Additional scouting parties were thrown out to right and left, and every precaution taken to prevent further mishap.

The next day we endeavored to pass a little stream called Turtle Creek, but found the road impracticable, so turned into the valley of another stream, known as Long Run, and on the night of the eighth encamped within a mile of the Monongahela, and only about ten from the fort. Here General St. Clair, who seems from the first to have feared for the result, advised that a detachment be sent forward to invest the fort, but it was finally judged best to send the detachment from the next camp, from which it could be readily reinforced in case it were attacked. We were to ford the Monongahela at Crooked Run, march along the west bank to the mouth of Turtle Creek, ford it a second time, and advance against the fort. Both fords

were described by the guides as very good ones and easy of passage, while if we attempted to advance straight ahead on the east bank of the river, we should encounter a very rough road, beside passing through a country admirably fitted by nature for an ambuscade. Colonel Gage was to march before daybreak to secure both fords, and the men turned in with full assurance that the battle so long deferred and so eagerly awaited was not far distant.

That night it so happened that I was placed in charge of one of the rear pickets, and I sat with my back against a tree, smoking lazily and wondering what the morrow would bring forth, when I heard a horse galloping down the road, and a moment later the sharp challenge of a sentry. I was on my feet in an instant, and saw that the picket had evidently been satisfied that all was well, for he had permitted the rider to pass. As he reached the edge of the camp, he emerged from the shadow of the trees, and I started as I looked at him.

"Colonel Washington!" I cried, and as he checked his horse sharply, I was at his side.

"Why, is it you, Tom?" he asked, and as I took his hand, I noticed how thin it was. "Well, it seems I am in time."

"Yes," I said. "The battle, if there be one, must take place to-morrow."

"Why should there not be one?" he questioned, leaning down from his saddle to see my face more clearly.

"The French may run away."

"True," he said, and sat for a moment thinking. "Yet it is not like them to run without striking a blow. No, I believe we shall have a battle, Tom, and I am glad that I am to be here to see it."

"But are you strong enough?" I asked. "You have not yet the air of a well man."

He laughed lightly as he gathered up his reins.

"In truth, Tom," he said, "I am as weak as a man could well be and still sit his horse, but the fever is broken and I shall be stronger to-morrow. But I must report to the general. He may have work for me," and he set spurs to his horse and was off.

I turned back to my station, musing on the iron will of this man, who could drag his body from a bed of sickness when duty called and yet think nothing of it. All about me gleamed the white tents in which the grenadiers and provincials were sleeping, dreaming perchance of victory. Alas, for how many of them was it their last sleep this side eternity!

The hours passed slowly and quietly. Presently the moon rose and illumined the camp from end to end. Here and there I could see a picket pacing back and forth, or an officer making his rounds. At headquarters lights were still burning, and I did not doubt that an earnest consultation was in progress there concerning the orders for the morrow.

At midnight came the relief, and I made the best of my way back to our quarters, crawled into the tent, whose flaps were raised to let in every

breath of air stirring, and lay down beside Spiltdorph. I tried to move softly, but he started awake and put out his hand and touched me.

"Is it you, Stewart?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "just in from picket. Colonel Washington reached camp an hour ago, to be here for to-morrow's battle."

"To-morrow's battle," repeated Spiltdorph softly. "Ah, yes, I had forgot. Do you know, Stewart, if I were superstitious, I should fear the result of to-morrow's battle, for I had a dream about it."

"What was the dream?" I asked.

"No matter, we are not women," and he turned to go to sleep again. "Good-night."

"Good-night," I said, and in a few moments his deep breathing told me he was again in the land of dreams. It was long before my own eyes closed, and my dreams were not of battle, but of a bench upon the river's bank, and a figure all in white sitting there beside me.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LESSON OF THE WILDERNESS

"WAKE up, man, wake up!" cried a voice in my ear, and I opened my eyes to see Spiltdorph's kindly face bending over me. "I let you sleep as long as I could," he added, as I sat up and rubbed my eyes, "for I knew you needed it, but the order has come for us to march."

"All right," I said. "I'll be ready in a minute," and I ran down to the brook and dipped my hands and face in the cool, refreshing water. A biscuit and a piece of cold beef formed my breakfast. Our company was striking tents and falling in for the march, and the camp was astir from end to end. The sun was just peeping over the tree-tops, for that fateful Wednesday, the ninth of July, 1755, had dawned clear and fair, and all the day rode through a sky whose perfect blue remained unbroken by a cloud.

We were soon ready for the road, and while waiting the word, Captain Waggoner told me that the advance had begun some hours before. At three o'clock, Colonel Gage had marched with two companies of grenadiers and two hundred rank and file to secure both crossings of the river, for it was believed that at the second crossing the French

would attack us, unless they intended giving up the fort without a struggle. An hour later, Sir John St. Clair had followed with a working party of two hundred and fifty men, to clear the road for the passage of the baggage and artillery. And at last came the word for us.

The ground sloped gently down to the Monongahela, nearly a mile away. The river here was over three hundred yards in width, and the regulars had been posted advantageously to guard against surprise. The baggage, horses, and cattle were all got over safely, for the water was scarce waist-deep at any point, and then the troops followed, so that the whole army was soon across.

Before us stretched a level bottom, and here we were formed in proper line of march, with colors flying, drums beating, and fifes playing shrilly. The sun's slant rays were caught and multiplied a thousand times on polished barrel and gold-laced helmet and glittering shoulder-knot. Every man had been instructed to put off the torn and travel-stained garments of Osnabrig he had worn upon the march, and to don his best uniform, and very fresh and beautiful they looked, the Forty-Fourth with its yellow facings, the Forty-Eighth with buff. Nor was the showing made by the Virginia companies less handsome, though perhaps a shade more sober. Nowhere was there visible a trace of that terrible journey through the wilderness. It seemed that this splendent host must have been placed here by some magic hand, alert, vigorous, immaculate, eager for the battle. I have only to close

my eyes to see again before me that brilliant and gallant array. The hope of a speedy ending to their struggle through the forest had brought new color to the faces of the men, and a light into their eyes, such as I had not seen there for many days. While we waited, the pieces were newly charged and primed, and the clatter of the cartouch boxes, as they were thrown back into place, ran up and down the lines.

At last came word from Gage that he had secured the second crossing, having encountered only a small party of Indians, who had run away at the first alarm, and that the route was clear. The drums beat the advance, and the army swept forward as though on parade. It was a thrilling sight, and in all that multitude there was not one who doubted the event. I think even Colonel Washington's misgivings must have melted away before that martial scene. The broad river rolled at our right, and beyond it the hills, crowned with verdure, looked down upon us. I do not doubt that from those heights the eyes of the enemy's spies were peering, and the sight of our gallant and seemingly invincible army must have startled and disheartened them. And as I looked along the ordered ranks, the barrels gleaming at a single angle, four thousand feet moving to the drum tap, I realized more deeply than ever that without training and discipline an army could not exist.

When we reached the second ford, about one in the afternoon, we found that the bank was not yet made passable for the wagons and artillery, so we

drew up along the shingle until this could be done. Pickets were posted on the heights, and half the force kept under arms, in case of a surprise. Spiltdorph and I sauntered together to the water's edge, and watched the pioneers busy at their work. I saw that my companion was preoccupied, and after a time he ceased to regard the men, but sat looking afar off and pitching pebbles into the stream.

"Do you know, Stewart," he said at last, "I am becoming timid as a girl. I told you I had a dream last night, and 't was so vivid I cannot shake it off."

"Tell me the dream," I said.

"I dreamed that we met the French, and that I fell. I looked up, and you were kneeling over me. But when I would have told you what I had to tell, my voice was smothered in a rush of blood."

"Oh, come!" I cried, "this is mere foolishness. You do not believe in dreams, Spiltdorph?"

"No," he answered. "And yet I never had such a dream as this."

"Why, man," I said, "look around you. Do you see any sign of the French? And yet their fort is just behind the trees yonder."

He looked at me in silence for a moment, and made as if to speak, but the tap of the drum brought us to our feet.

"Come," he said, "the road is finished. We shall soon see what truth there is in dreams."

We took our places and the advance began

again. First the Forty-Fourth was passed over and the pickets of the right. The artillery, wagons, and carrying horses followed, and then the provincial troops, the Forty-Eighth, while the pickets of the left brought up the rear. At the end of an hour the entire force was safe across, and as yet no sign of the enemy. Such good fortune seemed well-nigh unbelievable, for we had been assured there was no other place between us and the fort suited for an ambuscade.

Our company halted near a rude cabin which stood upon the bank. It was the house of Fraser, the trader, where Washington and Gist had found shelter after their perilous passage of the Allegheny near two years before. We had been there but a few minutes when Colonel Washington himself rode up.

"Captain Waggoner," he said, "you will divide your company into four flank parties, and throw them well out to the left of the line, fifty yards at least. See that they get to their places at once, and that they keep in touch, lest they mistake each other for the enemy."

He was off as Waggoner saluted, and I heard him giving similar orders to Peyronie's company behind us. It was certain that the general was taking no chance of ambuscade, however safe the road might seem. We were soon in place, Captain Waggoner himself in command of one party, Spiltdorph of the second, I of the third, and Lieutenant Wright of the fourth. As we took our places, I could see something of the disposition of

our force and the contour of the ground. The guides and a few light horse headed the column, followed by the vanguard, and the advance party under Gage. Then came St. Clair's working party, two fieldpieces, tumbrels, light horse, the general's guard, the convoy, and finally the rear guard. Before us stretched a fertile bottom, covered by a fair, open walnut wood, with very little underbrush, and rising gradually to a higher bottom, which reached to a range of hills two or three hundred feet in height. Here the forest grew more closely, the underbrush became more dense, and a great thicket of pea-vines, wild grape, and trailers completely shut off the view.

So soon as the line was formed, the drums beat the forward, and the head of the column was soon out of sight among the trees, St. Clair's working party cutting the road as they advanced. We were nearing the tangle of underbrush, which I thought marked the course of a stream, when there came suddenly a tremendous burst of firing from the front, followed by a great uproar of yells. My heart leaped, for I knew the French were upon us.

"Close up, men!" shouted Waggoner. "Bring your party up here, Stewart!"

I obeyed the order, and the other two parties joined us in a moment. Scarcely had they done so, when the thicket in front of us burst into flame, and three or four men fell. The others, well used, for the most part, to this kind of fighting, took at once to the trees, and we gradually

worked our way forward, keeping up a spirited fire till we reached the shelter of a huge log, which lay at the edge of the ravine. As I looked over it, I saw that the gully swarmed with Indians, firing at the main body of the troops, who seemed wedged in the narrow road. I could see no French, and so judged they were attacking on the other side.

"We've got 'em now!" yelled Waggoner. "Give it to 'em, men!" and we poured a well-directed volley into the yelling mob.

Fifteen or twenty fell, and the others, affrighted at the unexpected slaughter, threw down their guns and started to run. We were reloading with feverish haste, when from the woods behind us came a tremendous volley. We faced about to receive this new attack, for we thought the French were upon us. But we saw with horror that we were being fired at by the regulars, who had taken us for the enemy in their madness, and were preparing to fire again.

"You fools!" screamed Waggoner. "Oh, you fools!" and white with rage, he gave the order to retreat.

A moment later, as I looked around, I saw that Spiltdorph was not with us.

"Where is he?" I asked. "Where is Spiltdorph?"

Waggoner motioned behind us.

"He was hit," he said. "He was killed by those cowardly assassins."

"Perhaps he is not dead!" I cried, and before

he could prevent me, I ran back to the log. Not less than twenty dead lay near it, and in an instant I saw my friend. I dropped beside him, and tore away his shirt. He had been hit in the side by two bullets, and as I saw the wounds, I cursed the insensate fools who had inflicted them. I tried to stanch the blood, and as I raised his head, saw his eyes staring up at me.

"The dream!" he cried. "The dream! Stewart, listen. There is a girl — at Hampton" — A rush of blood choked him. He tried to speak, clutched at my sleeve, and then his head fell back, a great sigh shook him, and he was dead.

The Indians were pouring back into the ravine, and I knew I could stay no longer. So I laid him gently down, and with my heart aching as it had not ached since my mother died, made my way back to my company. "There is a girl," he had said, "at Hampton." What was it he had tried to tell? Well, if God gave me life, I would find out.

But every other thought was driven from my mind in my astonishment and horror at the scene before me. Gage's advance party had given way almost at the first fire, just as Burton was forming to support them, and the two commands were mingled in hopeless confusion. The officers spurred their horses into the mob, and tried in vain to form the men in some sort of order. The colors were advanced in different directions, but there was none to rally to them, for the men remained huddled together like frightened sheep. And all

around them swept that leaden storm, whose source they could not see, mowing them down like grain. They fired volley after volley into the forest, but the enemy remained concealed in the ravines on either side, and the bullets flew harmless above their heads.

At the moment I joined my company, General Braddock rode up, cursing like a madman, and spurred his horse among the men. I could see him giving an order, when his horse was hit and he barely saved himself from falling under it. Another horse was brought, and in a moment he was again raving up and down the lines.

"What means this?" he screamed, coming upon us suddenly, where we were sheltering ourselves behind the trees and replying to the enemy's fire as best we could. "Are you all damned cowards?"

"Cowards, sir!" cried Waggoner, his face aflame. "What mean you by that?"

"Mean?" yelled Braddock. "Damn you, sir, I'll show you what I mean! Come out from behind those trees and fight like men!"

"Ay, and be killed for our pains!" cried Waggoner.

"What, sir!" and the general's face turned purple. "You dare dispute my order?" and he raised his sword to strike, but his arm was caught before it had descended.

"These men know best, sir," cried Washington, reining in his horse beside him. "This is the only way to fight the Indians."

The general wrenched his arm away and, fairly foaming at the mouth, spurred his horse forward and beat the men from behind the trees with the flat of his sword.

"Back into the road, poltroons!" he yelled. "Back into the road! I'll have no cowards in my army!"

Washington and Waggoner watched him with set faces, while the men, too astounded to speak, fell slowly back into the open. Not until that moment did I comprehend the blind folly of this man, determined to sacrifice his army to his pride.

We fell back with our men, and there in the road found Peyronie, with the remnant of his company, his face purple and his mouth working with rage. All about us huddled the white-faced regulars, — the pride of the army, the heroes of a score of battles! — crazed by fright, firing into the air or at each other, seeing every moment their comrades falling about them, killed by an unseen foe. I turned sick at heart as I looked at them. Hell could hold no worse.

Hotter and hotter grew the fire, and I realized that it was not the French attacking us at all, but only their Indian allies. Not half a dozen Frenchmen had been seen. It was by the savages of the forest that the best troops in Europe were being slaughtered. Sir Peter Halket was dead, shot through the heart, and his son, stooping to pick him up, fell a corpse across his body. Shirley was shot through the brain. Polson was dead. Totten, Hamilton, Wright, Stone, were dead.

Spendelow had fallen, pierced by three bullets. The ground was strewn with dead and wounded. Horses, maddened by wounds, dashed through the ranks and into the forest, often bearing their riders to an awful death. The Indians, growing bolder, stole from the ravines, and scalped the dead and wounded almost before our eyes. I began to think it all a hideous nightmare. Surely such a thing as this could not really be!

Colonel Burton had succeeded in turning some of his men about to face a hill at our right, where the enemy seemed in great number, and we of Waggoner's company joined him. A moment later, Colonel Washington, who alone of the general's aides was left unwounded, galloped up and ordered us to advance against the hill and carry it. With infinite difficulty, a hundred men were collected who would still obey the order. As we advanced, the enemy poured a galling fire upon us. A ball grazed my forehead and sent a rush of blood into my eyes. I staggered forward, and when I had wiped the blood away and looked about me, I saw with amazement that our men had faced about and were retreating. I rushed after them and joined two or three other officers who were trying to rally them. But they were deaf to our entreaties and would not turn.

As I glanced back up the slope down which we had come, I saw a sight which palsied me. Colonel Burton had fallen, seemingly with a wound in the leg, and was slowly dragging himself back toward the lines. Behind him, an Indian was

dodging from tree to tree, intent on getting his scalp. Burton saw the savage, and his face grew livid as he realized how rapidly he was being overtaken. In an instant I was charging up the slope, and ran past Burton with upraised sword. The Indian saw me coming, and waited calmly, tomahawk in air. While I was yet ten or twelve paces from him, I saw his hand quiver, and sprang to one side as the blade flashed past my head. With a yell of disappointment, the Indian turned and disappeared in the underbrush. I ran back to Burton, and stooped to raise him.

"Allow me to aid you, Lieutenant Stewart," said a voice at my elbow, and there stood Harry Marsh, as cool as though there were not an Indian within a hundred miles. "I saw you turn back," he added, "and thought you might need some help."

I nodded curtly, for the bullets were whistling about us in a manner far from pleasing, and between us we lifted Burton and started back toward the lines.

"My left leg seems paralyzed," he said. "The bullet must have struck a nerve. If I could get on horseback, I should be all right again."

And then he staggered and nearly fell, for Marsh lay crumpled up in a heap on the ground.

"He is dead," said Burton, as I stared down in horror at what an instant before had been a brave, strong, hopeful human being. "A man never falls like that unless he is dead. He was doubtless shot through the heart. He was a brave boy. Did you know him?"

"His name was Marsh," I answered hoarsely. "He was my cousin."

"I shall not forget it," said Burton, and we stood a moment longer looking down at the dead.

But it was folly to linger there, and we continued on, I helping Burton as well as I could. And a great loathing came over me for this game called war. We reached the lines in safety, where Burton was taken to the rear and given surgical attention. His wound was not a bad one, and half an hour later, I saw that he had made good his assertion that he would be all right once he was on horseback.

In the mean time, affairs had gone from bad to worse, and the men were wholly unnerved. Those who were serving the artillery were picked off, and the pieces had been abandoned. A desperate effort was made to retake them, but to no avail. The Indians had extended themselves along both sides of the line, and had sharply attacked the baggage in the rear. The men were crowded into a senseless, stupefied mob, their faces blanched with horror and dripping with sweat, too terrified, many of them, to reload their firelocks. The general rode up and down the line, exposing himself with the utmost recklessness, but the men were long past the reach of discipline. After all, human nature has its depths which no drill-master can touch. Four horses were shot under him, and even while I cursed his folly, I could not but admire his courage. Nor was the conduct of his officers less

gallant. Throwing themselves from the saddle, they formed into platoons and advanced against the enemy, but not even by this desperate means could the regulars be got to charge. So many officers fell that at last it was as difficult to find any to give orders as to obey them, and when, as a last desperate resort, the general, putting his pride in his pocket, yielded to Washington's advice, and directed that the troops divide into small parties and advance behind the trees to surround the enemy, there was none to execute the manœuvre, which, earlier in the action, would have saved the day.

It was plain that all was lost, that there was nothing left but to retreat. We had no longer an army, but a mere mob of panic-stricken men. The hideous yelling of the savages, as they saw the slaughter they were doing and exulted in it, the rattle of the musketry, the groans and curses of the wounded who fell everywhere about us, the screams of the maddened horses, combined into a bedlam such as I hope never to hear again. Toward the last, the Virginia troops alone preserved any semblance of order. Away off to the right, I caught a glimpse of Peyronie rallying the remnant of his company, and I looked from them to the trembling regulars, and remembered with a rush of bitterness how they had laughed at us a month before.

Of a sudden there was a dash of hoofs beside me, and I saw the general rein up beneath a tree and look up and down the field. Colonel Washington was at his side, and seemed to be unwounded,

though he had been ever where the fight was thickest.

"This is mere slaughter!" the general cried at last. "We can do no more. Colonel Washington, order the retreat sounded."

And as the drums rolled out the dismal strain which meant disgrace for him and the blighting of all his hopes, he sat his horse with rigid face and eyes from which all life had fled. He had been taught the lesson of the wilderness.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEFEAT BECOMES DISHONOR

BUT there was worse to follow, for scarce had the first tap of the drums echoed among the trees, when the mob of regulars became a mere frenzied rabble. The officers tried to withdraw them from the field in some semblance of order, but the men seemed seized with mad, blind, unreasoning terror, and were soon beyond all hope of control. They rushed from the field, sweeping their officers before them, and carrying with them the provincial troops, who would have stood firm and behaved as soldiers should. I was caught in one edge of the mob, as I tried to restrain the men about me, and flung aside against a tree with such force that I stood for a moment dazed by the blow, and then I saw I was beneath the tree where Washington and Braddock sat their horses, watching with grim faces the frenzied crowd sweep past. The soldiers flung away their guns and accoutrements, their helmets, even their coats, that they might flee the faster, and I saw one strike down a young subaltern who tried to stay them. They jostled and fell over one another as sheep pursued by dogs. I saw a horseman, his head bandaged in a bloody cloth, trying to make way toward us against this cursing torrent,

and recognized Captain Orme. But he was dashed aside even as I had been, and for a moment I thought he had been torn from his horse and trodden underfoot. Torn from his horse he was, indeed, but escaped the latter fate, for some moments later he came to us on foot through the trees.

"Come, sir," he cried to the general, as he gained his side, "you must leave the field. There is no hope of getting a guard from among these cowards or persuading them to make a stand."

Braddock turned to answer him, but as he did so, threw up his hands and fell forward into the arms of his aide. I sprang to Orme's assistance, and between us we eased him down. His horse, doubtless also struck by a ball, dashed off screaming through the wood.

"They have done for me!" he groaned, as we placed his back against a tree. "Curse them, they have done for me."

Washington, who had left his horse the instant he saw the general fall, knelt and rested the wounded man's head upon his knee, and wiped the bloody foam from off his lips.

"Where are you hit?" he asked.

"Here," and the general raised his left hand and touched his side. "'T is a mortal hurt, and I rejoice in it. I have no wish to survive this day's disgrace."

He cast his bloodshot eyes at the rabble of fleeing men.

"And to think that they are soldiers of the line!" he moaned, and closed his eyes, as though to shut out the sight.

"We must get him out of this," said Orme quietly, and he turned away to call to some of the Forty-Eighth who were rushing past. But they did not even turn their heads. With an oath, Orme seized one by the collar.

"A purse of sixty guineas!" he cried, dangling it before his eyes, but the man threw him fiercely off, and continued on his way. Orme turned back to us, his face grim with anger and despair.

"'T is useless," he said. "We cannot stop them. The devil himself could not stop them now."

The general had lain with his eyes closed and scarce breathing, so that I thought that he had fainted. But he opened his eyes, and seemed to read at a glance the meaning of Orme's set face.

"Gentlemen," he said, more gently than I had ever heard him speak, "I pray you leave me here and provide for your own safety. I have but a little time to live at best, and the Indians will be upon us in a moment. Leave them to finish me. You could not do a kinder thing. I have no wish that you should sacrifice your lives so uselessly by remaining here with me. There has been enough of sacrifice this day."

Yes, he was a gallant man, and whatever of resentment had been in my heart against him vanished in that instant. We three looked into each other's eyes, and read the same determination there. We would save the general, or die defending him. But the situation was indeed a desperate one.

At that moment, a tumbrel drawn by two mad-

dened horses dashed by. One wheel caught against a tree, and before the horses could get it free or break from the harness, I had sprung to their heads.

"Quick!" I cried, "I cannot hold them long."

They understood in a moment, and, not heeding the general's entreaties and commands that he be left, lifted him gently into the cart. Washington sprang in beside him, Orme to the front, and in an instant I was clinging to the seat and we were tearing along the road. It was time, for as I glanced back, I saw the Indians rushing from the wood, cutting down and scalping the last of the fugitives. I saw that Orme was suffering from his wound, which seemed a serious one, and so I took the lines, which he relinquished without protest, and held the horses to the road as well as I was able. The tumbrel thundered on, over rocks and stumps of trees, over dead men, — ay, and living ones, I fear, — to the river-bank, where a few of the Virginia troops, held together by Waggoner and Peyronie, had drawn up. It did my heart good to see them standing there, so cool and self-possessed, while that mob of regulars poured past them, frenzied with fear. And the thought came to me that never hereafter would a blue coat need give precedence to a red one.

We splashed down into the water and across the river without drawing rein, since it was evident that no chance of safety lay on that side. Waggoner seemed to understand what was in the cart, for he formed his men behind us and followed us

across the river. Scarcely had we reached the other bank, when the Indians burst from the trees across the water, but they stopped there and made no further effort at pursuit, returning to the battle-ground to reap their unparalleled harvest of scalps and booty. About half a mile from the river, we brought the horses to a stop to see what would best be done.

"The general commands that a stand be made here," cried Washington, leaping from the cart, and Orme jumped down beside him, while I secured the horses.

"He is brave and determined as ever," said Washington in a low tone, "though suffering fearfully. The ball has penetrated his lung, I fear, for he can breathe only with great agony, and is spitting blood."

Colonel Burton joined us at that moment, and between us we lifted the general from the cart and laid him on a bed of branches on the ground.

"Rally the men here," he said, setting his teeth to keep back the groan which would have burst from him. "We will make a stand, and so soon as we can get our force in shape, will march back against the enemy. We shall know better how to deal with them the second time."

We turned away to the work of rallying the fugitives, but the task was not a light one, for the men seemed possessed with the fear that the savages were on their heels, and ran past us without heeding our commands to halt. At last we got together above a hundred men, posted sentries, and

prepared to spend the night. Darkness was already coming on, and finally Captain Orme and Colonel Washington, after having searched in vain for Doctor Craik, themselves washed the general's wound and dressed it as best they could. They found that the ball had shattered the right arm, and then passed into the side, though how deeply it had penetrated they had no means of telling.

Despite his suffering, he thought only of securing our position, and so soon as his wound was dressed, he ordered Captain Waggoner and ten men to march to our last camp and bring up some provisions which had been left there. He directed Colonel Washington to ride at once to Colonel Dunbar's camp, and order up the reinforcements for another advance against the French. He dictated a letter to Dinwiddie calling for more troops, which Washington was to take with him, and forward by messenger from Dunbar's camp. Though so shaken in body he could scarce sit upright in the saddle, Washington set off cheerfully on that frightful journey. Orme and I watched him until he disappeared in the gloom.

"A gallant man," he said, as we turned back to the rude shelter which had been thrown up over the place where the general lay. "I do not think I have ever seen a braver. You could not see as I could the prodigies of valor he performed to-day. And he seems to bear a charmed life, for though his coat was pierced a dozen times and two horses were killed under him, he has escaped without a scratch."

We walked on in silence until we reached headquarters, where Colonel Burton was also sitting, suffering greatly from his wound now he was no longer on horseback.

"Lieutenant Stewart," he said to me, "I place you in charge of the sentries for the night. Will you make the rounds and see that all is well? I know the men are weary, but I need hardly tell you that our safety will depend upon their vigilance. Guard especially against a surprise from the direction of the river."

I saluted, and started away to make the round. The sun had long since sunk behind the trees in a cloud of blood-red vapor, which seemed to me significant of the day. All about us through the forest arose the chorus of night sounds, and afar off through the trees I could catch the glinting of the river. What was happening beyond it, I dared not think. And then I came to a sudden stop, for I had reached the spot where the first sentry had been posted, but there was none in sight.

I thought for a moment that in the darkness I must have missed the place, but as I looked about me more attentively, I saw that could not be. I walked up and down, but could find no trace of him. Could it be that the Indians had stolen upon him and killed him with a blow of knife or tomahawk before he could cry out? Yet if that had happened, where was the body?

I hurried on toward the spot where the next sentry had been posted, and as I neared it, strained my eyes through the gloom, but could see no trace

of him. I told myself that I was yet too far away, and hurried forward, but in a moment I had reached the place. There was no sentry there. With the perspiration starting from my forehead, I peered among the trees and asked myself what mysterious and terrible disaster threatened us. The third sentry was missing like the others — the fourth had disappeared — I made the whole round of the camp. Not a single sentry remained. And then, of a sudden, the meaning of their absence burst upon me.

I hurried back to the camp, passing the spot where we had quartered the men whom we had rallied, but who were not placed on sentry duty.

As I expected, not one was there.

"All is well, I trust, Lieutenant Stewart?" asked Colonel Burton, as I approached. Then something in my face must have startled him, for he asked me sharply what had happened.

"I fear we cannot remain here, sir," I said, as calmly as I could. "All of our men have deserted us. There is not a single sentry at his post;" and I told him what I had found.

He listened without a word till I had finished.

"You will get the tumbrel ready for the general, lieutenant," he said quietly. "I will report this sad news to him. It seems that our defeat is to become dishonor."

I put the horses into harness again, and led them to the place where the general lay. He seemed dazed by the tidings of his men's desertion, and made no protest nor uttered any sound as we

lifted him again into the cart and set off through the night. We soon reached the second ford, and on the other side found Colonel Gage, who had contrived to rally about eighty men and hold them there with him. But there seemed no hope of keeping them through the night, so we set forward again, and plunged into the gloomy forest.

An hour later, as I was plodding wearily along beside the cart, thinking over the events of this tragic day, I was startled by a white face peering from beneath the upraised curtain out into the darkness. It was the stricken man within, who was surveying the remnant of that gallant army which, a few short hours before, had passed along this road so gayly, thinking itself invincible. He held himself a moment so, then let the curtain drop and fell back upon his couch.

CHAPTER XIX

ALLEN AND I SHAKE HANDS

Of the horrors of the night which followed, my pen can paint no adequate picture. Fugitives panted past us in the darkness, pursued by phantoms of their own imagining, thinking only of one thing — to leave that scene of awful slaughter far behind. The wounded toiled on, groaning and cursing, for to drop to the rear or to wander from the way was to die, if not by knife or tomahawk, none the less surely by hunger. Here and there some poor wretch who could win no farther sat groaning by the roadside or rolled in delirium upon the ground. The vast, impenetrable darkness of the forest overshadowed us, full of threatening suggestion and peopled with nameless terrors.

Colonel Gage remained with us with such of his men as he could hold together, and among them I saw Lieutenant Allen. He had been wounded in the shoulder, and at the suggestion of Captain Orme mounted the tumbrel and drove the horses, while I walked beside it. What agonies the stricken man within endured, tossed from side to side as the cart bumped along the rough road, through ruts and over rocks and stumps of trees, must have been beyond description, but not once during all

that long night did I hear a groan or complaint from him. Once he asked for water, and as Orme and I stooped over him I heard him murmur as though to himself, "Who would have thought it?" and again, "Who would have thought it?" Then he drank the water mechanically and lay back, and said no more.

The disaster had been too sudden, too unexpected, too complete, for any of us to fully realize. It seemed impossible that this handful of terror-stricken fugitives should be all that remained of the proud army to which we had belonged, and that this army had been defeated by a few hundred Indians. Few of us had seen above a dozen of the enemy, — we of Waggoner's company were the only ones who had looked down upon that yelling mob in the ravine, — and scarce knew by whom we had been slaughtered. It was incredible that two regiments of the best troops in England should have been utterly routed by so contemptible a foe. The reason refused to acknowledge such a thing.

I was plodding along, wearily enough, thinking of all this, when I heard my name called, and glancing up, saw Allen looking round the corner of the wagon cover.

"Won't you come up here, Lieutenant Stewart?" he asked. "There is ample room for two, and 't is no use to tire yourself needlessly."

I accepted gratefully, though somewhat astonished at his courtesy, and in a moment was on the seat beside him. He fell silent for a time, nor was I in any mood for talk, for Spiltdorph's fate and

young Harry Marsh's sudden end weighed upon me heavily.

"Lieutenant Stewart," he said at last, "I feel that I did you and the Virginia troops a grave injustice when I chose to question their courage. What I saw to-day has opened my eyes to many things. In all the army, the Virginia troops were the only ones who kept their wits about them and proved themselves men. I wish to withdraw the expressions I used that night, and to apologize for them most sincerely."

My hand was in his in an instant.

"With all my heart," I said. "I have thought more than once since then that we were both too hasty."

He laughed, — a short laugh, in which there was no mirth.

"I think there are many of us who have been too hasty in this campaign," he said. "It is easy enough to see now that regulars are worth little in this frontier warfare, where their manœuvres count for nothing, and that the provincials should have been left to fight in their own fashion. It is not a pleasant thought that all my work in drilling them was worse than wasted, and that every new manœuvre I taught them impaired their efficiency by just so much."

"'T was not quite so bad as that," I protested. "The Virginia troops have much to thank you for, and we shall know better how to deal with the enemy next time."

"Next time?" he repeated despondently. "But when will next time be, think you?"

"Why, at once, to be sure!" I cried. "We have still, with Colonel Dunbar's companies, over a thousand men. So soon as we join with him, and get our accoutrement in order, we can march back against the enemy, and we shall not be caught twice in the same trap."

He did not answer, and there was a moment's silence. I glanced at his face and saw that it was very grave.

"You do not mean," I asked, with a great fear at my heart, "that you think it possible we shall retreat without striking another blow?"

"I fear it is only too possible," he answered gloomily. "If the general lives, he may order another advance; indeed, I am sure he will, in the hope of saving some fragment of his reputation. But if he dies, as seems most likely, Colonel Dunbar, who succeeds to the command, is not the man to imperil his prestige by taking such a risk."

"Risk?" I cried. "How is this any greater than the risk we took at the outset?"

"You forget, lieutenant," said Allen, "that all of our equipment was left on the field. The men flung away their arms, many of them even the clothes upon their backs. Everything was abandoned, — the general's private papers, and even the military chest, with £10,000 in it. These losses will not be easily repaired."

I could not but admit the truth of this, and said as much.

"And then," continued Allen, still more gloomily, "we have suffered another loss which can never

be made good. The morale of the men is gone. They have no longer the confidence in themselves which a winning army must have. I doubt if many of them could be got to cross the Monongahela a second time."

Yes, that was also true, and we fell silent, each busy with his own thoughts. It seemed too horrible, too utterly fantastic. At last came the dawn, and the light of the morning disclosed us to each other. As I looked about me, I wondered if these scarecrows, these phantoms of men, could be the same who had gone into battle in all the pride of manhood and pageantry of arms the day before. Orme was ghastly, with his bandaged head and torn, mud-stained uniform, and as I looked at him, I recalled sadly the gallant figure I had met at Fort Necessity. Nor were the others better. Haggard faces, bloodshot eyes, lips drawn with suffering, hair matted with blood, — all the grim and revolting realities of defeat were there before us, and no longer to be denied. And I realized that I was ghastly as any. A bullet had cut open my forehead, leaving a livid gash, from which the blood had dried about my face. I had lost my hat, and my uniform was in tatters and stained with blood.

We soon met the men who had gone forward with Waggoner to secure us some supplies, and halted by a little brook to wash our injuries. Captain Orme and some others attended as well as they were able to the general, and gave him a little food, which was all too scarce, barely sufficient for a single meal. Fortunately, Doctor Craik, who had

learned that the general was wounded, came up soon after, and made a careful examination of the injury. He came away, when he had finished, with grave face, and told us there was little hope, as the wound was already much inflamed and fevered, and the general was able to breathe only with great agony. He said there could be no question that the ball had entered the lung. The general fancied that he would be easier on horseback, so when the march was begun again, he was mounted on the horse Orme had been riding, but after half an hour his pain grew so intense that he had to be taken down. It was evident that he could not endure the jolting of the cart, and we finally rigged up a sort of litter out of a portion of the tumbrel top, and the men took turns in bearing him on this between them.

Daylight banished much of the terror of the night, and as we toiled onward, we began to talk a little, each to tell what part he had seen of the battle. It was here that I heard the story of Harry Gordon, the engineer who had been marking out the road in advance of the column, and who had first seen the enemy. They had appeared suddenly, coming through the wood at a run, as though hurrying from the fort, and led by a man whose silver gorget and gayly fringed hunting-shirt at once bespoke the chief. So soon as he saw Gordon, he halted and waved his hat above his head, and the rabble of savages at his heels had dispersed to right and left and disappeared as if by magic. An instant later came a tremendous rifle fire from either

flank, which cut Gage's troops to pieces. They had rallied and returned the fire with spirit, so that for a time the issue hung in the balance; but the terrible fire to which they were subjected was too much for any discipline to withstand, and they had finally given way in confusion, just as Burton was forming to support them.

It was not until long afterward that I heard the French story of the fight, but I deem it best to set it down here. As our army had approached through the wilderness, the Indians who lurked upon our flanks had carried greatly exaggerated stories of our strength to Fort Duquesne, and M. de Contrecœur prepared to surrender on terms of honorable capitulation, deeming it mere madness to oppose a force so overwhelming in strength and so well disciplined. To the French the reputation of General Braddock and of the Forty-Fourth and Forty-Eighth regiments of the line was well known and commanded the greatest respect. On the eighth of July, it was reported that the English were only a few miles from the fort, which they would probably invest the next day, and M. de Beaujeu, a captain of the regulars, asked the commandant for permission to prepare an ambuscade and contest the second passage of the Monongahela. Contrecœur granted the request with great reluctance, and only on condition that Beaujeu obtain the assistance of the Indians, of whom there were near a thousand camped about the fort. Accordingly, Beaujeu at once called the warriors to a council, and urged that they accompany him against

the English on the morrow. They received his proposition with marked coldness, and according to the Indian custom, asked until morning to consider their reply. In the morning, the council was called together again, and the Indians refused to take part in the expedition. At that moment a runner burst in upon them and announced that the enemy was at hand. Beaujeu, who knew well the inflammable nature of his hearers, was on his feet in an instant.

"I," he cried, "am determined to go out against the enemy. I am certain of victory. What! Will you suffer your father to depart alone?"

It was the one spark needed to set the Indians on fire. They were frantic with excitement. Barrels of bullets and casks of powder were rolled from the fort, and their heads knocked out, so that each Indian could take what he needed. War paint was donned, and in an hour the band, nine hundred strong, of whom near seven hundred were Indians and the remainder Canadians and regulars, set off silently through the forest. Beaujeu calculated, at the most, on giving us a severe check as we crossed the second ford, but long ere he reached the river, the beating of the drums and the tramp of the approaching army told him that he was too late, and that we had already crossed. Quickening their pace to a run, in a moment they came upon our vanguard, and as Beaujeu gave the signal, the Indians threw themselves into two ravines on our flanks, while the Canadians and French held the centre. The first volley of Gage's troops killed

Beaujeu, and was so tremendous that it frightened the Indians, who turned to flee. But they were rallied by a few subalterns, and finding that the volleys of the regulars did little damage except to the trees, returned to the attack, and during the whole engagement were perfectly sheltered in the ravines, rifle and artillery fire alike sweeping above them. They lost altogether but twenty-five or thirty men, and most of these fell before the volley which we of Waggoner's company had fired into the ravine.

After our retreat, no pursuit was attempted, the Indians busying themselves killing and scalping the wounded and gathering up the rich booty which the army had left behind. They decked themselves in British uniforms, stuck the tall caps of the grenadiers above their painted faces, wound neck, wrist, and ankle with gold lace, made the wood to echo with the dreadful scalp-halloo. Such an orgy of blood they never had before; not another such will they ever have.

One other horror must I record, which chokes me even yet to think of. A score of regulars, surrounded by savages and cut off in their retreat from the remainder of the army, yielded themselves captive to the victors, thinking to be treated as prisoners of war have ever been in Christian nations. But the Indians knew only their own bloodthirsty customs. Half of the captives were tomahawked on the spot. The others were stripped of clothing, their faces blackened, their hands bound behind them, and were driven forward to

the Allegheny, where, just across from Fort Duquesne, a stake had been set in the river's bank. Arrived there, the prisoners began to understand the fate prepared for them, yet they could not believe. A hundred yards away across the river stood the walls of the fort, crowded with soldiers, the fair lilies of France waving lazily above their heads. Calmly they watched the terrible preparations, — Contrecœur, Dumas, and all the others, — and not one raised a hand to rescue those unhappy men, or uttered a word to mitigate their torture. From dark to dawn the flames shimmered across the water, — for the English went to their fate singly, — and things were done to turn one sick with horror; yet did the French look tranquilly from their bastions and joke one to another. Our flag, thank God, has never been sullied by a deed like that!

Early the next morning, the Indians started westward to their homes, laden with booty, sated with slaughter, leaving the French to take care of themselves as best they might. The latter remained for a week in great fear of another attack, which they would have been quite unable to withstand, little thinking that our army was fleeing back to the settlements with feet winged by an unreasoning terror.

We reached Gist's plantation at ten o'clock on the night of the tenth, and here we were compelled to stop because of our own exhaustion and the great suffering of the general. And here, early the next morning, came Colonel Washington, sit-

ting his cushioned saddle like some gaunt spectre, and bringing with him wagons loaded with provision. The general still persisted in the exercise of his duties, despite his suffering, and he at once detailed a party to proceed toward the Monongahela with a supply of food, for the succor of the stragglers and the wounded who had been left behind, — a duty which was ill fulfilled because of the cowardice of those to whom it was intrusted. Meanwhile we pushed on, and reached Dunbar's camp that night.

We found it in the utmost confusion. At five o'clock on the morning after the battle, a teamster, who had cut loose his horse and fled at the first onset, had ridden madly into the camp crying that the whole army was destroyed and he alone survived. At his heels came other teamsters, for with an appalling cowardice, which makes me blush for my countrymen, they had one and all cut loose their teams at the first fire, and selecting the best horse, had fled precipitately from the field. Toward noon, Colonel Washington had arrived, bringing the first accurate news of the disaster, and at once setting on foot the relief expedition. After him came troops of haggard, toil-worn, famished men, without arms, bewildered with terror, fearing a second ambuscade at every step, and with the yells of the Indians still ringing in their ears. The news of the disaster and the incoherent stories of these half-crazed fugitives spread consternation through the camp. Men deserted by scores and started hot-foot for the settlements, and all pre-

tense of discipline vanished. Nor did the arrival of the general greatly better matters. He was fast sinking, and long periods of delirium sapped his strength. It was evident that the end was near.

On the morning of the twelfth, I was engaged in collecting such of the Virginia troops as I could find about the camp, when I saw Colonel Washington approaching with a face so gloomy that I foresaw some new disaster.

"What is it?" I asked, almost before he had reached me.

"Have you not heard?" and he looked meaningly back toward a spring near which a number of men were unheading some casks. "We are to destroy all our powder and stores, burn our wagons, and flee back to the settlements, like so many children."

"Why, 't is folly!" I cried. "'T is monstrous! Who gave such an order?"

"I know not," and Washington smiled bitterly. "It is certain that the general did not, since he has been raving with fever all the night. Besides, his one thought has been to march back against the French the instant he could get his troops together. Come, walk over with me and let us watch this unhappy work."

I followed him, and witnessed a sight which filled me with speechless anger and indignation. Powder casks were being knocked open and their contents cast into the spring, cohorns broken, shells burst, provisions destroyed, and upwards of a hundred and fifty wagons burned. I remembered bitterly what

work we had had to obtain those wagons. Such a scene of senseless and wanton destruction I had never seen before, and hope never to see again. A frenzy of terror seemed to possess officers and men alike, and I turned away, raging at heart, to think that to such men as these had been intrusted the defense of our country. At last the work of destruction was complete. With barely enough provision to carry us to Fort Cumberland, and with no ammunition save that in our cartouch boxes, the retreat commenced, if the flight of a disordered and frenzied rabble can be dignified by such a name.

CHAPTER XX

BRADDOCK PAYS THE PRICE

It was the morning of Sunday, July 13, that this shameful flight began. Its arrant cowardice weighed on many of the officers who were left alive, and even on some of the men, especially, I am glad to say, on many of the Virginians. Whose fault was it? Well, Colonel Dunbar was in command, since the general was no longer conscious, and must take the blame.

Colonel Washington had asked me to remain near him, if possible. He had secured me a horse, and together with Captain Orme, who was no less depressed, we formed the escort to the litter whereon lay the dying man. Doctor Craik came to us from time to time, but the general was far beyond human aid. I had never respected him so much as in this hour, for of his downright valor I had had every proof. If only his pride had been a little less, that his valor might have counted! It was while I was riding thus, absorbed in melancholy thought, that a horse cantered up beside me, and looking up, I saw Lieutenant Allen.

"Confess I was a true prophet, Lieutenant Stewart," he remarked, with a sorry attempt at a smile, "though damme if I could have foretold

that act of folly back yonder! You see, I know our new commander better than do you."

"So it seems," I answered, and at that moment caught Colonel Washington's astonished eyes fixed upon us. Allen followed my glance, and smiled as he saw the expression of Washington's face.

"He cannot understand our friendliness," he laughed. "He is doubtless wondering if we are arranging the preliminaries for the desperate encounter for which we were booked. Let me explain the situation to him," and he spurred to Washington's side. "I had occasion to say to Lieutenant Stewart a few evenings ago," he said, "that I had been grievously mistaken in my estimate of his courage, and that of the Virginia companies, and that I was truly sorry that I had ever questioned them. In the light of to-day's event, I am still more sorry, and I wish to add to you, Colonel Washington, that I regret the words I used to you, and that I sincerely ask your pardon."

"'T is granted with all my heart!" cried Washington, his face illumined with that fine smile which always lighted it before any deed of courage or gentleness, and the two shook hands warmly. "'T was granted before you asked it. I am not such a fire-eater as Tom, back there. I have regretted that foolish quarrel many times, and had determined that it should not lead to another meeting between you, which would have been mere folly. Come here, sir," he called to me. "I wish to tell you how pleased I am that this quarrel has been adjusted."

"No more pleased than I, I assure you, colonel," I laughed. "Lieutenant Allen gave me a sample of his swordsmanship I shall not soon forget. I should have been as helpless before him as a lamb in the jaws of a tiger."

"Now you are mocking me!" cried Allen, and as I related to Colonel Washington the story of his little bout with Langlade, we rode on laughing, the best of friends.

"But, believe me, Lieutenant Stewart," he said, when I had finished, "it was not self-complacency which urged me to take up the foils that day. I merely wished to show you that you had need to keep in practice, and so prevent you from becoming over-sure."

"'T was well done," said Washington heartily. "I appreciate your conduct, Lieutenant Allen."

"And I certainly took the lesson to heart," I laughed. "Just before you came, I had conceived a most exalted opinion of my own abilities. I shall not make the mistake a second time."

Presently Allen fell back to rejoin the rear-guard, with which he had been stationed, and we rode on beside the general's litter. He was delirious most of the time, and was fighting the battle of the Monongahela over and over again, giving orders and threshing from side to side of his couch in his agony. In one of his intervals of consciousness, he called my companion to him.

"Colonel Washington," he said in a low tone, "I feel that I have done you great injustice. Had I followed your advice, this catastrophe might not

have happened. But my eyes were not opened until too late. Had I lived, I should not have forgot you. I am sure you cannot withhold your pardon from a dying man."

Washington's lips were trembling as he bent over the litter.

"If there is anything to pardon, general," he said softly, "be sure I pardon you with all my heart. You have the love of all your officers, sir, who revere you as a brave and gallant man."

"Ay, but a proud and stubborn one," and he smiled sadly. "Would God I had had the grace to see it while it was yet time. Colonel Washington," he added, "I wish you to have my charger, Bruce, and my body servant, Bishop. These two gentlemen are witnesses that I give them to you."

Orme and I bowed our assent, and Washington thanked him with a trembling voice. He was soon wandering again, this time, apparently, among the scenes of his earlier manhood.

"Messieurs de la Garde Française," he cried, "tirez, s'il vous plait!"

"Ah," murmured Orme, "he is at Fontenoy."

And again, —

"Poor Fanny, I always thought she would play till she would be forced to tuck herself up."

"She was his sister," said Orme, answering our questioning glances. "She ruined herself at cards and then hanged herself. It was a sad story."

And yet again, —

"No, I'll not take your purse!" he cried; and

then after a moment, "nor ask my life at your hands. Do what you will."

I could bear no more, and rode forward out of earshot. To see this gallant man lying there, slowly dying, bereft at one stroke of life and that far dearer to him than life, his military reputation, moved me as few things had ever done. He had another lucid interval toward the middle of the afternoon, and warmly praised the conduct of his officers.

"They were gallant boys, every one," he said. "They did their duty as brave men should. How many of them fell?" he asked suddenly, turning to Orme.

"Sixteen," answered Orme sadly.

"And how many were wounded?"

"Forty-seven."

"Sixty-three, — and there were only eighty-nine," and Braddock sighed heavily. "And how went it with the men?"

Orme hesitated, fearing to disclose the extent of the disaster, but the general's eyes were on his and would take no denial.

"They suffered very heavily," said Orme at last. "Less than five hundred escaped unharmed. All of the wounded who remained on the field were killed by the Indians."

"And we went into battle with near fifteen hundred men," said Braddock. "Why, it was mere slaughter. There has never an army gone into battle which lost such proportion of its numbers. Ah, well, I shall soon join them. And they are

happier than I, for they went to their end honored and applauded, whilst I am a broken and ruined man, who will be remembered only to be cursed."

He turned his head away from us, and a great tear rolled down his cheek. Orme was crying like a child, and made no effort to conceal it, nor were Washington and I less moved.

"At least," he said at last, turning back to us with a smile, "it were better to have died than to have lived. I am glad I do not have to live."

He soon lapsed again into delirium, and seemed to be living over a second time a meeting with some woman.

"Dear Pop," he said, "we are sent like sacrifices to the altar. They have given me a handful of men and expect me to conquer whole nations. I know that I shall never see you more. Good-by, Pop, and God bless you."

Orme turned away for a moment to master his emotion.

"'T was his last night in London," he said when he could speak. "He was to set out on the morrow, and he asked Colonel Burton and myself to go with him to visit a very dear protégée of his, George Anne Bellamy, the actress, to whom, I think, he has left all his property. He used to her almost the same words he has just repeated."

"So he had doubts of his success," said Washington musingly. "Well, he was a brave man, for he never permitted them to be seen."

He was fast growing weaker. His voice faltered and failed, and he lay without movement in

his litter, continuing so until eight o'clock in the evening. We had halted for the night, and had gathered about his couch, watching him as his breathing grew slowly fainter. At last, when we thought him all but gone, he opened his eyes, and seeing the ring of anxious faces about him, smiled up at them.

"It is the end," he said quietly. "You will better know how to deal with them next time;" and turning his head to one side, he closed his eyes.

We buried him at daybreak. The grave was dug in the middle of the road, so that the wagons passing over it might efface all trace of its existence and preserve it inviolate from the hands of the Indians. Our chaplain, Mr. Hughes, had been severely wounded, so it was Colonel Washington who read the burial service. I shall not soon forget that scene, — the open grave in the narrow roadway, the rude coffin draped with a flag, the martial figure within in full uniform, his hands crossed over the sword on his breast, the riderless charger neighing for its master, and the gray light of the morning over it all. The burial service has never sounded more impressively in my ears than it did as read that morning, in Colonel Washington's strong, melodious voice, to that little group of listening men, in the midst of the wide, unbroken, whispering forest. How often have I heard those words of hope and trust in God's promise to His children, and under what varying circumstances!

We lowered him into the grave, and lingered

near until the earth was heaped about it. Then the drums beat the march, the wagons rolled over it, and in half an hour no trace of it remained. So to this day, he lies there undisturbed in the heart of the wilderness, in a grave which no man knows. Others have railed at him, — have decried him and slandered him, — but I remember him as he appeared on that last day of all, a brave and loyal gentleman, not afraid of death, but rather welcoming it, and the memory is a sweet and dear one. If he made mistakes, he paid for them the uttermost penalty which any man could pay, — and may he rest in peace.

Of the remainder of that melancholy flight little need be said. We struggled on through the wilderness, bearing our three hundred wounded with us as best we could, and marking our path with their shallow graves, as they succumbed one after another to the hardships of the journey. On the twenty-second day of July we reached Fort Cumberland, and I learned with amazement that Dunbar did not propose to stop here, although he had placed near a hundred and fifty miles between him and the enemy, but to carry his whole army to Philadelphia, leaving Virginia open to Indian and French invasion by the very road which we had made. He alleged that he must go into winter quarters, and that, too, though it was just the height of summer. Colonel Washington ventured to protest against this folly, but was threatened with court-martial, and came out of Dunbar's quarters red with anger and chagrin.

And sure enough, on the second of August, Dunbar marched away with all his effective men, twelve hundred strong, leaving at the fort all his sick and wounded and the Virginia and Maryland troops, over whom he attempted to exercise no control. I bade good-by to Orme and Allen and such other of the officers as I had met. Colonel Burton took occasion to come to me the night before he marched, and presented me with a very handsome sword in token of his gratitude, as he said, for saving his life, — an exploit, as I pointed out to him, small enough beside a hundred others that were done that day.

The sword he gave me hangs above my desk as I write. I am free to confess that I have performed no great exploits with it, and when I took it down from its hook the other day to look at it, I found that it had rusted in its scabbard.

CHAPTER XXI

VIRGINIA BIDS US WELCOME

"To my mind, there is only one thing to be done. That is to retire."

The speaker was Colonel Henry Innes, commandant of the fort, but as he looked up and down the row of faces opposite him, he saw few which showed assent. Scarcely had the rear-guard of Dunbar's troops disappeared among the trees which lined the narrow military road, when Colonel Innes had called this meeting of the officers left at the fort, "to decide," as the summons put it, "on our future course of action." As if, I thought indignantly to myself, there could be any question as to what our future course of action should be.

"We are left here," continued the speaker, in a louder voice and growing somewhat red in the face, "with scarce five hundred men, all provincials, and most of them unfit for service. A great part of the army's equipment has been abandoned or destroyed back there in the woods. In short, we are so weak that we can hope neither to advance against the enemy nor to repel an assault, should they march against us in force, as they are most like to do."

For a moment there was an ominous silence.

"May I ask what it is you propose, Colonel Innes?" asked Captain Waggoner at last.

"I propose to abandon the place," replied Innes, "and to fall back to Winchester or some other point where our wounded may lie in safety and our men have opportunity to recover from the fatigues of the campaign."

Again there was a moment's silence, and all of us, as by a common impulse, glanced at Colonel Washington, who sat at one end of the table, his head bowed in gloomy thought. The fever, which he had shaken off for a time, had been brought back by the arduous work he had insisted on performing, and he was but the shadow of his former self. He felt our eyes upon him and suddenly raised his head.

"Do you really anticipate that the French will march against us, Colonel Innes?" he asked quietly. "There were scarce three hundred of them at the fort three weeks ago, hardly enough for an expedition of such moment, and it is not likely that they can be reinforced to undertake any campaign this summer."

"There would be little danger from the French themselves," retorted Innes, with an angry flush, "but they will undoubtedly rally the Indians, and lead them against us along the very road which Braddock cut over the mountains. Fort Cumberland stands at one end of that road."

Washington smiled disdainfully.

"I have heard of few instances," he said,

"where Indians have dared attack a well-manned fortification, and of none where they have captured one. To retreat from here would be to leave our whole frontier open to their ravages, and would be an act of cowardice more contemptible than that which Colonel Dunbar performed this morning, when he marched his troops away."

I had never seen him so moved, and I caught the infection of his anger.

"Colonel Washington is right!" I cried hotly. "Our place is here."

Innes did not so much as look at me. His eyes were on Washington, and his face was very red.

"Colonel Washington," he sneered, his lips curling away from his teeth with rage, "was, I believe, an aide on the general's staff. Since the general is dead, that position no longer exists. Consequently, Colonel Washington is no longer an officer of the army, and I fail to see what right he has to take part in this discussion."

Half a dozen of us were on our feet in an instant, but Washington was before us and waved us back with a motion of his hand.

"Colonel Innes is right," he said, his deep-set eyes gleaming like two coals of fire. "I am no longer an officer of the army, and I thank God this is so, since it is about to further disgrace itself."

"Take care, sir," cried Innes, springing to his feet. "You forget there is such a thing as court-martial."

"And you forget that I am no longer of the army, and so can defy its discipline."

He stood for a moment longer looking Innes in the eyes, and then, without saluting, turned on his heel and left the place. A moment later the council broke up in confusion, for Innes saw plainly that the sentiment of nearly all the other officers present was against him, and he did not choose to give it opportunity of expression. I had scarcely reached my quarters when I received a note from his secretary stating that as the mortality among the Virginia companies had been so heavy, it had been decided to unite the three into one, and my lieutenancy was therefore abolished. Trembling with anger, I hurried to Washington's quarters and laid the note before him.

"Why, Tom," he said, with a short laugh, after he had read it, "we seem to have fallen into disgrace together. But come," he added more cheerfully, seeing my downcast face, "do not despair. We may yet win out. The governor and the House of Burgesses will not receive so quietly this project to retire from the frontier. I had a letter from Dinwiddie but the other day, in which he said as much. In the mean time, I am going home to Mount Vernon to rest, and you must come with me."

I accepted readily enough, for I knew not what else to do, and on the morrow we set out. Colonel Washington was so ill that we could proceed but slowly. We finally reached Winchester, and from there, because of the better road, crossed the river to Frederick, where a great surprise awaited us. For scarcely were we off our horses at the little

tavern, than the host, learning our names, rushed away down the wide, rambling street, crying the news aloud, to our great wonderment, who saw not why it should interest any one. In an incredibly short time, above a hundred people had gathered before the inn, cheering and hallooing with all their might, while we looked at them in dumb amazement. We sent for the host to learn what this might mean, thinking doubtless there was some mistake, and even as he entered, a dozen men burst into the room, and insisted that we should not be permitted for a moment to think of putting up at an inn, but should accompany them home.

"But, gentlemen," protested Washington, "you have mistaken us for some one else. We have done nothing to deserve your hospitality."

"Have you not?" they cried, and they hustled us out into the yard. There was no denying them, so off we rode again, greatly bewildered, and in the course of half an hour were being introduced by our self-appointed entertainer to his wife and three pretty daughters.

"'T is Colonel Washington, you understand, wife," he cried. "Colonel Washington, whose advice, had it been followed, would have saved the expedition."

A great light broke upon me. So my friend's merits were to be recognized at last, — were to win him something more than contumely and insult, — and as he would have made denial, I cut him short.

"Do not listen to him!" I cried. "'T is true, every word of it, and much more besides."

Whereat the girls smiled at me very sweetly, our host wrung my hand again, and I swear there were tears in Washington's eyes as he looked at me in feigned anger. Such a night's entertainment as was given us I shall not soon forget, nor Colonel Washington either, I dare say. Word of our presence had got about the neighborhood with singular speed, and the people flocked in by dozens, until the great hallway, which ran through the house from front to rear, was crowded from end to end. Then, nothing would do but that Colonel Washington must tell the story of the advance, the ambuscade, and the retreat, which he did with such consummate slighting of his own part in the campaign that I interrupted him in great indignation, and, unheeding his protests, related some of the things concerning him which I have already written, and which, I swear, were very well received.

"But Lieutenant Stewart says nothing of what he himself did," cried Washington, when I had finished.

"Because I did nothing worth relating," I retorted, my cheeks hot with embarrassment at the way they looked at me.

"Ask him how he won that sword he wears at his side," he continued, not heeding my interruption, his eyes twinkling at my discomfiture. "Believe me, 't is not many Virginia officers can boast such a fine one."

And then, of course, they all demanded that he tell the story, which he did with an exaggeration that I considered little less than shameful. In

some mysterious manner, tankards of cold, bitter Dutch beer, the kind that is so refreshing after a journey or at the close of a hot day's work, had found their way into the right hand of every man present, and as Washington ended the story and I was yet denying, our host sprang to his feet.

"We 'll drink to the troops of Maryland and Virginia," he cried, "who behaved like soldiers and died like men, teaching England's redcoats a lesson they will not soon forget, and to two of the bravest among them, Colonel Washington and Lieutenant Stewart!"

It was done with a cheer that made the old hall ring, and when, half an hour later, I found myself beside the prettiest of the three daughters of the house, I was not yet quite recovered. Only this I can say, — it is a pleasant thing to be a hero, though trying to the nerves. I had only the one experience, and did not merit that, as the reader has doubtless decided for himself.

Of course there was a dance, — what merry-making would be complete without one? — and Colonel Washington walked a minuet with a certain Mistress Patience Burd, with a grace which excited the admiration of every swain in the room, and the envy of not a few, — myself among the number, for I was ever but a clumsy dancer, and on this occasion no doubt greatly vexed my pretty partner. But every night must end, as this one did at last. Colonel Washington was much better next morning, for his illness had been more of the mind than of the body, and our kind reception

had done wonders to banish his vexation. Our friends bade us Godspeed, and we rode on our way southward. I never saw the house again, and it is one of my great regrets and reasons for self-reproach that I have forgot the name of the honest man who was our host that night, and remember only that the name of his prettiest daughter was Betty.

As we reached a part of the country which was more closely settled, I soon perceived that however great dishonor had accrued to British arms and British reputations as the result of that battle by the Monongahela, Colonel Washington had won only respect and admiration by his consistent and courageous conduct. We were stopped a hundred times by people who asked first for news, and when they heard my companion's name, vied with one another to do him honor. It did me good to see how he brightened under these kind words and friendly acts, and how the color came again into his face and the light into his eyes. And I hold that this was as it should be, for I know of nothing of which a man may be more justly proud than of the well-earned praises of his fellows.

At last, toward the evening of a sultry August day, we turned our horses' heads into the wide road which led up to Mount Vernon, and drew near to that hospitable and familiar mansion. News of our approach must have preceded us, for there, drawn up in line, were the bowing and grinning negroes, while at the entrance gate were Mrs. Washington and her children, as well as a dozen

families assembled from as many miles around to do honor to the returning warrior. My heart beat more quickly as I ran my eyes over this gathering, but fell again when I saw that the family from Riverview was not there.

And such a greeting as it was! We all remained a space apart until Mrs. Washington had kissed her son, as something too sacred for our intrusion. But when he turned to greet his neighbors, I have rarely seen such genuine emotion shown even in our whole-hearted Virginia. At the great dinner which followed, with Mrs. Washington at the head of the table and her son at the foot, we told again the story of the campaign, and the men forgot to sip their wine until the tale was ended. Yet with all this largess of goodwill, I was not wholly happy. For I had no home to go to, nor was there any waiting to welcome me, and the woman I loved seemed farther away than ever, though now she was so near.

CHAPTER XXII

A NEW DANGER AT RIVERVIEW

BUT Dorothy was not so near as I had thought, for next morning came a message from my aunt. It was delivered almost as soon as I was out of bed by a negro boy who had ridden over at daybreak. It was dated but two days before, and began very formally.

"Sir," it ran, "since you no doubt will wish to recuperate from the fatigues of the campaign so unfortunately ended, and as there is no place where you can do this so well as at Riverview, I hasten to assure you that the place is entirely at your service."

I paused a moment to get my breath. Her reference to the campaign was intended as a stab, of course, yet could it be she was relenting? But hope fell as I read on.

"In order that you may feel at liberty to avail yourself of this invitation," the note continued, "my daughter and I have accepted one of long standing to spend a month, or perhaps two months, at the home of a relative. James is at Williamsburg, so that you may be entirely free to occupy your leisure at Riverview as best pleases you. Do not think that you have driven us from the place,

for that is not at all the case. I have long felt the need of rest, and take advantage of this opportunity, while there is little doing on the plantation, to secure it. I trust to your sense of honor to make no inquiries as to where we are stopping, nor to attempt to see my daughter, who, I believe, has already discovered that any fancy she may ever have seemed to entertain for you was more imaginary than real."

Here was a blow, straight from the shoulder, and I winced under it.

"I could never consent," the note concluded, "to any attachment of a serious nature between you, having quite other views for my daughter, which, I am sure, will be for her happiness and well-being."

I read the note through a second time before I realized what a blow it gave to all my hopes. I had had little cause to anticipate any other treatment, it is true, and yet I have often observed that men hope most who have least reason for it, and this was so in my case. As I read the note again, I could not but admire the adroitness of its author. She had placed me upon honor — without my consent, 't is true — to make no effort to see Dorothy. I stood biting my lips with anger and vexation, and then, with sudden resolve, turned back to the messenger.

"Go around to the kitchen and get something to eat, if you are hungry," I said to him. "I shall be ready to ride back with you in half an hour;" and as he disappeared around a corner of the house,

agrin from ear to ear at the prospect of refreshment, I sought Mrs. Washington and told her that I had just received a note from my aunt and would ride to Riverview at once. How much she suspected of my difference with my aunt, I do not know, but if she experienced any surprise at my sudden departure, she certainly did not show it, saying only that she regretted that I must go so soon, and that I must always consider Mount Vernon no less my home than Riverview, — an assurance which Colonel Washington repeated when the moment came to say good-by, and I rode away at last with a very tender feeling in my heart for those two figures which stood there on the steps until I turned into the road and passed from sight.

"And how is everything at Riverview, Sam?" I asked of the boy, as we struck into the road and settled our horses into an easy canter. He did not answer for a moment, and when I glanced at him to see the cause of his silence, I was astonished to find him rolling his eyes about as though he saw a ghost.

"What 's the matter, boy?" I asked sharply. "Come, speak out. What is it?"

He looked behind him and all around into the woods, and then urged his horse close to mine.

"Mas' Tom," he said, almost in a whisper, "dere 's gwine t' be hell at d' plantation foh long. Youse stay 'way fum it."

I looked at him, still more astonished by his singular behavior. A full-blooded negro does not

turn pale, but under the influence of great terror his skin grows spotted and livid. Sam's was livid at that moment.

"See here, Sam," I said sharply, "if you have anything to tell, I want you to tell me right away. What are you afraid of?"

"D' witch man," he whispered, his eyes almost starting from his head, and his forehead suddenly beading with perspiration.

"The witch man? Has a witch man come to Riverview?"

He nodded.

"And what is he doing there, Sam?"

"He says d' French dun whopped d' English, an' a-comin' t' set all d' niggahs free. He says we mus' holp, an' dere won't be no mo' slaves. All ub us be free, jus' like white folks."

It took me a minute or two to grasp the full meaning of this extraordinary revelation.

"He says the French are coming to set all the niggers free?" I repeated.

Sam nodded.

"And that the niggers must help them?"

Again Sam nodded.

"Help them how, Sam?"

He hesitated.

"By killing the English, Sam?"

"I reckon dat 's it," he said reluctantly.

"And burning down their houses, perhaps?"

"I 'se hearn dat talked erboat, too."

I drew my horse in with a jerk, and catching Sam's by the bridle, pulled it to me.

"Now, boy," I said, "you must tell me all about this. I promise you that no one shall harm you."

He began to whimper.

"I 'll tell yo', Mas' Tom," he stuttered, "but yo' mus' n' hurt d' witch man."

"Who is this witch man?" I demanded.

"Ole uncle Polete."

"Polete 's no witch man. Why, Sam, you 've known him all your life. He 's nothing but an ordinary old nigger. He 's been on the plantation twenty or thirty years. All that he needs is a good whipping."

But the boy only shook his head and sobbed the more.

"Ef he 's a-killed," he cried, "his ha'nt 'll come back fo' me."

I saw in a moment what the boy was afraid of. It was not of old Polete in the flesh, but in the spirit. I thought for a moment. Well, I had no reason to wish Polete any harm, yet if it were discovered that he had been inciting the slaves to insurrection, there was no power in the colony could save his life. If his owner did not execute him, the governor would take the matter out of his hands, and order it done himself.

"I tell you what I 'll do, Sam," I said at last. "You tell me everything you know, and I 'll do all I can to save Polete. I believe I can stop this thing without calling in any outside help."

He agreed to this, and as we jogged along I gradually drew the details of the plot from him. The news of our defeat had, it seemed, stirred up

the negroes at the plantation, and in some way the wild rumor had been started that a great force of French was marching over the mountains to conquer Virginia and all the other English colonies; that emissaries had come to the negroes and promised them that if they would assist the invading army, they would be given their freedom and half of the colony to live in. It was at this time that old Polete, crazed, perhaps, by working in the tobacco fields under the blazing sun, had suddenly developed into a witch man, and proclaimed that he could see the French army marching, and urged the negroes to strike a blow at once in order to merit their freedom when the French should come. Meetings were held almost nightly in the woods some miles from their cabins, whence they stole away after dark by twos and threes. Just what their plans were Sam did not know, as he did not belong to the inner council, but he believed that something would happen soon because of the increasing excitement of the older negroes who were acquainted with the plans.

I rode on for some time in silence, thinking over this story and trying to decide what I would better do. I did not know until months later that signs of unrest had been observed among the slaves all over the colony, and that the governor had considered the situation so serious that he had sent out many warnings concerning the danger. It was as well, perhaps, that I did not know this then, for I might not have thought my own portion of the problem so easy of solution. At the time, I had

no thought but that the outbreak was the result of old Polete's prophecies, and was confined alone to Riverview.

Sam was cantering along behind me, his face still livid with terror, and as I caught sight of it again, I wondered what impulse it was had moved him to confide in me, with such fancied peril to himself.

"I would n' tole nobody else," he said, in answer to my question, "but you tole a lie fo' me oncet, an' saved me a lickin'."

"Told a lie for you, Sam?" I questioned in astonishment. "When was that?"

"Don' yo' 'membah boat d' whip, Mas' Tom, what I stole?" he asked.

I looked at him for a moment before that incident of my boyhood came back to me.

"Why, yes, I remember it now," I said. "But that was years ago, Sam, and I had forgotten it. Besides, I did n't tell a lie for you. I only told old Gump that I wished to give you the whip."

"Well," said Sam, looking at me doubtfully, "yo' saved me a lickin' anyhow, an' I did n' f'git it," and he dropped back again.

Well, to be sure, an act of thoughtfulness or mercy never hurts a man, a fact which I have since learned for myself a hundred times, and wish all men realized.

We were soon at Riverview, and I ordered Sam to ride out to the field where the men were working, and tell the overseer, Long, that I wished to see him. Sam departed on the errand, visibly uneasy, and I wandered from my room, where I had

taken my pack, along the hall and into my aunt's business room while I waited his return. I stood again for a moment at the spot on the staircase where I had kissed Dorothy that morning, — it seemed ages ago, — and as I looked up, I fancied I could still see her sweet face gazing down at me. But it was only fancy, and, with a sigh, I turned away and went down through the hall.

There were reminders of her at every turn, — there was the place where she had sat sewing in the evenings ; over the fireplace hung a little picture she had painted, rude enough, no doubt, but beautiful to my eyes. With a sudden impulse, I ran down the steps and to the old seat under the oaks by the river. Nothing had changed, — even the shadows across the water seemed to be the same. But as I ran my hand mechanically along the arm of the seat on the side where Dorothy always sat, my fingers felt a roughness which had not been there before, and as I looked to see what this might be, I saw that some one had cut in the wood a T and a D, intertwined, and circled by a tiny heart. Who could have done it? I had no need to ask myself the question. My heart told me that no one but Dorothy could have done it, and that she knew that I should come and sit here and live over again the long evenings when she had sat beside me. It was a message from my love, and with trembling lips I bent and kissed the letters which she had carved. As I sat erect again, I heard footsteps behind me, and turned to see Long approaching.

"You sent for me, Mr. Stewart?" he asked. "I saw you sitting here, and decided you were waiting for me."

"Yes," I said, and I shook hands with him, for he was an honest man and a good workman.

"I am glad to see you back again, sir, though looking so ill," he added. "I trust the air of Riverview will soon bring you around all right," and from his eyes I knew he meant it.

I thanked him, and bade him sit beside me. Then, in a few words, I told him what I had learned of the negro meetings, and saw his face grow grave.

"'T is what I have always feared," he said, when I had finished. "There are too many of them in the colony, and they feel their strength. If they had a leader and a chance to combine, they might do a great deal of harm. However, we shall soon knock this in the head."

"How?" I asked.

"Make an example of Polete," he answered decidedly. "That 's the best way, sir. Put him out of the way, let the other niggers see us do it, and they 'll quiet down fast enough."

"Undoubtedly that is the easiest way," I said, smiling, "but, unfortunately, I had to promise the person who gave me the information that Polete should not be harmed."

Long stared at me for a moment in amazement.

"It would be unfortunate if any of the other planters should hear of that promise, Mr. Stewart,"

he said at last. "They would probably take Polete's case into their own hands."

I laughed at his evident concern.

"No doubt," I said, "but they are not going to hear of it. I intend telling no one but yourself, for we two are quite sufficient to stop this thing right here, and it need go no further."

"Perhaps we are," he answered doubtfully. "What is your plan, sir?"

"Polete will hold a meeting to-night over there in the woods. Well, we will be present at the meeting."

He looked at me without saying a word.

"Our visit will probably not be very welcome," I continued, "but I believe it will produce the desired effect. Will you go with me?"

"Certainly," he answered readily, "but I still think my plan the best, sir."

"Perhaps it is," I laughed, "but we will try mine first," and he went back to the field, agreeing to be at the house at eight o'clock.

I covered with my hand the tiny letters on the arm of the bench, and, looking out across the broad river, drifted into the land of dreams, where Dorothy and I wandered together along a primrose path, with none to interfere.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GOVERNOR SHOWS HIS GRATITUDE

I ATE my supper in solitary splendor in the old dining-room, with my grandfather's portrait looking down upon me, and Long found me an hour later sitting in the midst of a wreath of smoke just within the hallway out of the river mist.

"'T was as you said, Mr. Stewart," he remarked, as he joined me. "Fully a hundred of the niggers stole off to the woods to-night so soon as it was dark. They went down toward the old Black Snake swamp."

"Very well," I said, rising. "Wait till I get my hat, and I am with you."

"But you will go armed?" he asked anxiously.

I paused to think for a moment.

"No, I will not," I said finally. "A brace of pistols would avail nothing against that mob, should they choose to resist us, and our going unarmed will have a great moral effect upon them as showing them that we are not afraid."

"You have weighed fully the extent of the risk you are about to run, I hope, sir," protested Long.

"Fully," I answered. "'T is not yet too late for you to turn back, you know. I have no right to ask you to endanger your life to carry out this

plan of mine. Perhaps it would be wiser for you not to go."

"And if I stay, you"—

"Will go alone," I said.

He caught my hand and wrung it heartily.

"You are a brave man, Mr. Stewart," he exclaimed. "If I have shown any hesitation, 't was on your account, not on my own. I am ready to go with you," and as he spoke, he drew a brace of pistols from beneath his coat and laid them on the table by the fireplace.

"Wait one moment," I said, and hurrying to my aunt's room, I wrote a short note telling her of the trouble I had discovered and where Long and I were going, so that, if we did not return, she would know what had happened. Folding and sealing it, I wrote on the outside, "To be delivered at once to Mrs. Stewart," left it on the table, knowing that no one would enter the room till morning, and hurried back to rejoin Long. We were off without further words, and were soon well on our way.

It was a clear, cool, summer night, with the breeze just stirring in the trees and keeping up a faint, unceasing whispering among the leaves. The moon had risen some hours before, and sailed upward through a cloudless sky. Even under the trees it was not wholly dark, for the moon's light filtered through here and there, making a quaint patchwork on the ground, and filling the air with a peculiar iridescence which transformed the ragged trunks of the sycamores into fantastic hob-

goblins. All about us rose the croaking of the frogs, dominating all the other noises of the night, and uniting in one mighty chorus in the marshes along the river. An owl was hooting from a distant tree, and the hum of innumerable insects sounded on every side. Here and there a glittering, dew-spangled cobweb stretched across our path, a barrier of silver, and required more than ordinary resolution to be brushed aside. As we turned nearer to the river, the ground grew softer and the underbrush more thick, and I knew that we had reached the swamp.

Then, in a moment, it seemed to me that I could hear some faint, monotonous singsong rising above all the rest. At first I thought it was the croaking of a monster frog, but as we plodded on and the sound grew more distinct, I knew it could not be that. At last, in sheer perplexity, I stopped and motioned Long to listen.

"Do you hear it?" I asked. "Do you know what it is?"

"Yes, I have heard it for the last ten minutes, Mr. Stewart," he answered quietly. "It is old Polete preaching to the niggers. I have often heard their so-called witch men preach. It is always in a singsong just like that."

As we drew nearer, I perceived that this was true, for I could catch the tones of the speaker's voice, and in a few minutes could distinguish his words. Some years before, when the river had been in flood, its current had been thrown against this bank by a landslide on the other side, and had

washed away trees and underbrush for some distance. The underbrush had soon sprung up again, but the clearing still remained, and as we stopped in the shadow of the trees and looked across it, we saw a singular sight. Negroes to the number of at least a hundred and fifty were gathered about a pile of logs on which Polete was mounted. He was shouting in a monotone, his voice rising and falling in regular cadence, his eyes closed, his head tilted back, his face turned toward the moon, whose light silvered his hair and beard and gave a certain majesty to his appearance. His hearers were seemingly much affected, and interrupted him from time to time with shouts and groans and loud amens.

"Dis is d' promise' lan'!" cried old Polete, waving his arms above his head in a wild ecstasy. "All we hab t' do is t' raise up an' take it from ouh 'pressahs. Ef we stays hyah slaves, it 's ouh own fault. Now 's d' 'pinted time. D' French is ma'chin' obah d' mountings t' holp us. Dee 'll drib d' English into d' sea, and wese t' hab ouh freedom, — ouh freedom an' plenty lan' t' lib on."

"Dat 's it," shouted some one, "an' we gwine t' holp, suah!"

The negroes were so intent upon their speaker that they did not perceive us until we were right among them, and even then for a few minutes, as we forced our way through the mob, no one knew us.

"It 's Mas' Tom!" yelled one big fellow, as my hat was knocked from my head. And, as if by

instinct, they crowded back on either side, and a path was opened before us to the pile of logs where Polete stood. He gaped at us amazedly as we clambered up toward him, and I saw that he was licking his lips convulsively. A yell from the crowd greeted us as we appeared beside him, — a menacing yell, which died away into a low growling, and foretold an approaching storm.

"Now, boys," I cried, "I want you to listen to me for a minute. That is a lie about the French coming over the mountains, — every word of it. If Polete here, who, you know, is only a laborer like most of you, says he has seen them coming in a vision, why he 's simply lying to you, or he does n't know what he 's talking about. There are not three hundred Frenchmen the other side of the mountains, in the first place, and it will be winter before they can get any more there. So if you fight, you will have to fight alone, and you can guess how much chance of success you have. You know the penalty for insurrection. It 's death, and not an easy death, either, — death by fire! If you go ahead with this thing, no power on earth can save every one of you from the stake."

"It 's a lie!" yelled Polete. "I did hab d' vision. I did see d' French a-comin' — millions o' dem — all a-ma'chin' t'rough d' forest. Dee 's almost hyah. Dee want us t' holp."

A hoarse yell interrupted him, and I saw that something must be done.

"Wait a minute, boys," I cried. "Let me ask Polete a question. You say you have seen the French marching, Polete?"

He nodded sullenly.

"What was the color of their uniforms?"

He hesitated a moment, but saw he must answer.

"Dee was all colors," he said. "Red, blue, green, — all colors."

I saw that my moment of triumph was at hand.

"Now, boys," I cried, holding up my hand so that all might be quiet and hear my words. "You may guess how much value there is in Polete's visions. He says he has seen the French army marching, and he has just told me that their uniforms are all colors, — red, blue, green, and so on. Now, if he has seen the army, he ought to know the color of the uniforms, ought he not?"

"Yes, yes," yelled the mob.

"Well, boys," I continued, "the French wear only one color uniform, and that color is just the one which Polete has not mentioned — white. No Frenchman goes to war except in a white uniform."

They were all silent for a moment, and I saw them eyeing Polete distrustfully.

But he was foaming at the mouth with fury.

"A lie!" he screamed. "A lie, same 's de uddah. Don' yo' see what we mus' do? Kill 'em! Kill 'em, an' nobody else 'll evah know!"

That low growling which I had heard before again ran through the crowd. I must play my last card.

"You fools!" I cried, "do you suppose we are the only ones who know? If so much as a hair of our heads is touched, if we are not back among

our friends safe and sound when morning comes, every dog among you will yelp his life out with a circle of fire about him!"

They were whining now, and I knew I had them conquered.

"I came here to-night to save you," I went on, after a moment. "Return now quietly to your quarters, and nothing more will be said about this gathering. Put out of your minds once for all the hope that the French will help you, for it is a lie. And let this be the last time you hold a meeting here, or I will not answer for the consequences."

I waved them away with my hand, and they slunk off by twos and threes until all of them had disappeared in the shadow of the wood.

"And now, what shall we do with this cur?" asked Long, in a low voice, at my elbow. I turned and saw that he had old Polete gripped by the collar. "He tried to run away," he added, "but I thought you might have something to say to him."

Polete was as near collapse as a man could be and yet be conscious. He was trembling like a leaf, his eyes were bloodshot, and his lower jaw was working convulsively. He turned an imploring gaze on me, and tried to speak, but could not.

"Polete," I said sternly, "I suppose you know that if this night's work gets out, as it is certain to do sooner or later, no power on earth can save your life?"

"Yes, massa," he muttered, and looked about

him wildly, as though he already saw the flames at his feet.

"Well, Polete," I went on, "after the way you have acted to-night, I see no reason why I should try to save you. You certainly did all you could to get me killed."

"Yes, massa," he said again, and would have fallen had not Long held him upright by the collar.

I waited a moment, for I thought he was going to faint, but he opened his eyes again and fixed them on me.

"Now listen," I went on, when he appeared able to understand me. "I 'm not going to kill you. I 'm going to give you a chance for your life, — not a very big chance, perhaps, but a great deal better one than you would have here."

"Yes, massa," he said a third time, and there was a gleam of hope in his face.

"I 'm going to let you go," I concluded. "I 'd advise you to follow the river till you get beyond the settlements, and then try for Pennsylvania. I promise you there 'll be no pursuit, but if you ever show your face around here again, you 're as good as dead."

Before I had finished, he had fallen to his knees and bowed his head upon my feet, with a peculiar reverence, — a relic, I suppose, of his life in Africa. He was blubbering like a baby when he looked up at me.

"I 'll nevah f'git yeh, Mas' Tom," he said. "I 'll nevah f'git yeh."

"That 'll do, uncle," and I caught him by the collar and pulled him to his feet. "I don't want to see you killed, but you 'd better get away from here as fast as you can, and drop this witch man business for good and all. Here 's two shillings. They 'll get you something to eat when you get to Pennsylvania, but you 'd better skirmish along in the woods the best you can till then, or you 'll be jerked up for a runaway."

He murmured some inarticulate words, — of gratitude, perhaps, — and slid down from the pile of logs. We watched him until he plunged into the woods to the south of the clearing, and then started back toward the house. I was busy with my own thoughts as we went, and Long was also silent, so that scarcely a word passed between us until we reached the steps.

"Sit down a minute, Long," I said, as he started back to his quarters. "I don't believe we 'll have any more trouble with those fellows, but perhaps it would be well to watch them."

"Trust me for that, sir," he answered. "I 'll see to it that there are no more meetings of that kind. With Polete away, there is little danger. The only question is whether he will stay away."

"I think he will," and I looked out over the river thoughtfully. "He seemed to understand the danger he was in. If he returns, you will have to deliver him up to the authorities at once, of course."

"Well," said Long, "I 'm not a bloodthirsty man, sir, as perhaps you know, but I think we 'd

be safer if he were dead. Still, we 'll be safe enough anyway, now the niggers know their plot is discovered. But we were in a ticklish place there for a while this evening."

"Yes," I answered, with a smile. "It was not so easy as I had expected. I want to thank you, Long, for going with me. It was a service on your part which showed you have the interest of the place at heart, and are not afraid of danger."

"That 's all right, sir," he said awkwardly. "Good-night."

"Wait till I get your pistols," I said. "You left them in the hall, you know."

The moonlight was streaming through the open window, and as I stepped into the hall, I rubbed my eyes, for I thought I must be dreaming. There in a great chair before the fireplace sat Colonel Washington. His head had fallen back, his eyes were closed, and from his deep and regular breathing I knew that he was sleeping. Marveling greatly at his presence here at this hour, I tiptoed around him, got Long's pistols, and took them out to him. Then I lighted my pipe and sat down in a chair opposite the sleeper, and waited for him to awake. I had not long to wait. Whether from my eyes on his face, or some other cause, he stirred uneasily, opened his eyes, and sat suddenly bolt upright.

"Why, Tom," he cried, as he saw me, "I must have been asleep."

"So you have," I said, shaking hands with him, and pressing him back into the chair, from which

he would have risen. "But what fortunate chance has brought you here?"

"The most fortunate in the world!" he cried, his eyes agleam. "You know I told you that the governor and House of Burgesses would not bear quietly the project to leave our frontier open to the enemy. Well, read this," and he drew from his pocket a most formidable looking paper. I took it with a trembling hand and carried it to the window, but the moon was almost set, and I could not decipher it.

"What is it?" I asked, quivering with impatience.

"Here, give it to me," he said, with a light laugh, which reminded me of the night I had seen him first in the governor's palace at Williamsburg. "The House of Burgesses has just met. They ordered that a regiment of a thousand men be raised to protect the frontier in addition to those already in the field, and voted £20,000 for the defense of the colony."

"And that is your commission!" I cried. "Is it not so?"

"Yes," he said, scarce less excited than myself. "'T is my commission as commander-in-chief of all the Virginia forces."

I wrung his hand with joy unutterable. At last this man, who had done so much, was to know something beside disappointment and discouragement.

"But you do not ask how you are concerned in all this," he continued, smiling into my face, "or

why I rode over myself to bring the news to you. 'T is because I set out to-morrow at daybreak for Winchester to take command, and I wish you to go with me, Tom, as aide-de-camp, with the rank of captain."

CHAPTER XXIV

A WARNING FROM THE FOREST

It was at Winchester that Colonel Washington established his headquarters, maintaining a detachment at Fort Cumberland sufficient to repel any attack the Indians were like to make against it, and to cut off such of their war parties as ventured east of it. From Winchester he was able more easily to keep in touch with all parts of the frontier, and with the string of blockhouses which had been built years before as a gathering-place for the settlers in the event of Indian incursions. By the first of September his arrangements had been completed, but long before that time it was evident the task was to be no easy one.

Already, from the high passes of the Alleghanies, war parties of Delawares and Shawanoes had descended, sweeping down upon the frontier families like a devastating whirlwind, and butchering men, women, and children with impartial fury. The unbounded forest, which covered hill and valley with a curtain of unbroken foliage, afforded a thousand lurking-places, and it was well-nigh impossible for an armed force to get within striking distance of the marauders. So, almost daily, stories of horrible cruelty came to the fort, plunging the commander

into an agony of rage and dejection at his very impotence. The fort was soon crowded with refugees, — wives bewailing their husbands, husbands swearing to avenge their wives, parents lamenting their children, children of a sudden made orphans, — and from north and south, scores of hard-featured, steel-eyed men came to us, their rifles in their hands, to offer their services, and after a time these came to be one of the most valuable portions of our force.

Ah, the stories they told us! Tragedies such as that which Spiltdorph and I had come upon had been repeated scores of times. The settler who had left his cabin at daybreak in search of game, or to carry his furs to the nearest post, returned at sundown to find only a smoking heap of ashes where his home had been, and among them the charred and mutilated bodies of his wife and children. Horror succeeded horror, and the climax came one day when we were passing a little schoolhouse some miles below the fort, in the midst of a district well populated. Wondering at the unwonted silence, we dismounted, opened the door, and looked within. The master lay upon the platform with his pupils around him, all dead and newly scalped. The savages had passed that way not half an hour before.

And to add to the trials of the commander, his troops, hastily got together, were most of them impatient of restraint or discipline, and with no knowledge of warfare, while the governor and the House of Burgesses demanded that he undertake

impossibilities. It was a dreary, trying, thankless task.

"They expect me to perform miracles," he said to me bitterly one day. "How am I to protect a frontier four hundred miles in length with five or six hundred effective men, against an enemy who knows every foot of the ground, and who can find a hiding-place at every step?"

Only by the sternest measures could many of the levies be brought to the fort, and one man — a captain, God save the mark! — sent word that he and his company could not come because their corn had not yet been got in. Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, we did accomplish something. There were a few of the Iroquois who yet remained our friends, and the general spared no effort to retain their goodwill, for their services were invaluable. With a lofty contempt for the Delawares and Shawanoes, whom they had one time subjugated and compelled to assume the name of women, they roamed the forest for miles around, and more than once enabled us to ambush one of the war parties and send it howling back to the Muskingum, where there was great weeping and wailing in the lodges upon its return. But it was fruitless work, for the Indians, driven back for the moment, returned with augmented fury, and again drenched the frontier in the blood of the colonists.

We realized one and all that nothing we could do would turn the tide of war permanently from our borders and render the frontier safe until the French had been driven from Fort Duquesne. For

it was they who urged the Indians on, supplying them with guns and ammunition, and rewarding them with rum when they returned to the fort laden with English scalps. An expedition against the French stronghold was for the present out of the question, and we could only bite our nails and curse, waiting for another night when we might sally forth and fall upon one of the war parties. But the few Indians we killed seemed a pitiful atonement for the mangled bodies scattered along the frontier and the hundreds of homes of which there remained nothing but blackened ruins. As the weeks passed and the Indians saw our impotence, they grew bolder, slipped through the chain of blockhouses, and ravaged the country east of us, disappearing into the woods as if by magic at the first alarm.

The month of August and the first portion of September wore away in this dreary manner, and it was perhaps a week later that Colonel Washington sent me to Frederick to make arrangements for some supplies. The distance, which was a scant fifty miles, was over a well-traveled road, and through a district so well protected that the Indians had not dared to visit it; so I rode out of the fort one morning, taking with me only my negro boy Sam, whom I had selected for my servant since the day he had warned me against Polete. I remember that the day was very warm, and that there was no air stirring, so that we pushed forward with indifferent speed. At noon we reached a farmhouse owned by John Evans, where we remained until

the heat had somewhat moderated, and set forward again about four o'clock in the afternoon.

We had ridden for near an hour, and I was deep in my own thoughts, when I heard something breaking its way through the underbrush, and the next moment my horse shied violently as a negro stumbled blindly into the road and collapsed into a heap before he had taken half a dozen steps along it. I reined up sharply, and as I did so, heard Sam give a shrill cry of alarm.

"Shut up, boy," I cried, "and get off and see what ails the man. He can't hurt you."

But Sam sat in his saddle clutching at his horse's neck, his face spotted with terror as I had seen it once before.

"What is it, Sam?" I asked impatiently.

"Good Gawd, Mas' Tom," he cried, his teeth chattering together and cutting off his words queerly, "don' yo' see who 't is? Don' yo' know him?"

"Know him? No, of course not," I answered sharply. "Who is he?"

"Polete," gasped Sam. "Polete, come back aftah me," and seemed incapable of another word.

In an instant I was off my horse and kneeling in the road beside the fallen man. Not till then did I believe it was Polete. From a great gash in the side of his head the blood had soaked into his hair and dried over his face. His shirt was stained, apparently from a wound in his breast, but most horrible of all was a circular, reeking spot on the crown of his head from which the scalp had been

stripped. It needed no second glance to tell me that Polete had been in the hands of the Indians.

By this time Sam had partially recovered his wits, and being convinced that it was Polete in the flesh, not in the spirit, brought some water from a spring at the roadside. I bathed Polete's head as well as I could, and washed the blood from his face. Tearing open his shirt, I saw that blood was slowly welling from an ugly wound in his breast. He opened his eyes after a moment, and stared vacantly up into my face.

"Debbils," he moaned, "debbils, t' kill a po' ole man. Ain't I said I done gwine t' lib wid yo'? Kain't trabble fas' 'nough fo' yo'? Don' shoot, oh, don' shoot! Ah!"

He dropped back again into the road with a groan, and tossed from side to side. I thought he was dying, but when I dashed more water in his face, he opened his eyes again. This time he seemed to know me.

"Is it Mas' Tom?" he gasped. "Mas' Tom what let me go?"

"Yes, Polete," I answered gently, "it 's Master Tom."

"Whar am I?" he asked faintly. "Have dee got me 'gin? Dee gwine to buhn me?"

"No, no," I said. "Nobody 's going to harm you, Polete. Where have you been all this time?"

"In d' woods," he whispered, "hidin' in d' swamps, an' skulkin' long aftah night. Could n' nevah sleep, Mas' Tom. When I went t' sleep, seemed laike d' dogs was right aftah me."

His head fell back again, and a rush of blood in his throat almost choked him.

"Wish I 'd stayed at d' plantation, Mas' Tom," he whispered. "Nothin' could n' been no wo'se 'n what I went frough. Kep' 'long d' ribbah, laike yo' said, but could n' git nothin' t' eat only berries growin' in d' woods. Got mighty weak, 'n' den las' night met d' Injuns."

"Last night!" I cried. "Where, Polete?"

"Obah dah 'long d' ribbah," he answered faintly. "Dee gib me some'n' t' eat, an' I frought maybe dee 'd take me 'long, but dis mornin' dee had a big powwow, an' dee shot me an' knock me in d' haid. Seems laike dee 's gwine t' buhn a big plantation t'-night."

"A big plantation, Polete?" I asked. "Where? Tell me — oh, you must tell me!"

But his head had fallen back, and his eyes were closed. There was another burst of blood from his nose and mouth. I threw water over his face, slapped his hands, and shouted into his ears, but to no avail. Sam brought me another hatful of water, but his hands trembled so that when he set it down, he spilled half of it. I dashed what was left over the dying man, but his breathing grew slow and slower, and still his eyes were closed. I trembled to think what would happen should I never learn where the Indians were going, if Polete should never open his eyes again to tell me. But he did, at last, — oh, how long it seemed! — he did, and gazed up at me with a little smile.

"Reckon it 's all obah wid ole Polete, Mas' Tom," he whispered.

"Where is this plantation, Polete?" I asked. "The plantation the Indians are going to attack. Quick, tell me."

He looked at me a moment longer before answering.

"D' plantation? Obah dah, eight, ten mile, neah d' ribbah," and he made a faint little motion northward with his hand. The motion, slight as it was, brought on another hemorrhage. His eyes looked up into mine for a moment longer, and then, even as I gazed at them, grew fixed and glazed. Old Polete was dead.

We laid him by the side of the road and rolled two or three logs over him. More we could not do, for every moment was precious.

"Sam," I said quickly, as we finished our task, "you must ride to the fort as fast as your horse will carry you. Tell Colonel Washington that I sent you, and that the Indians are going to attack some big plantation on the river eight or ten miles north of here. Tell him that I have gone on to warn them. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sah," he gasped.

"Well, don't you forget a word of it," I said sternly. "You can reach the fort easily by nine o'clock to-night. Now, be off."

He hesitated a moment.

"What is it?" I cried. "You are not afraid, boy?"

He rubbed his eyes and began to whimper.

"Not fo' myself, Mas' Tom," he said. "But yo' gwine t' ride right into d' Injuns. Dee 'll git yo' suah."

"Nonsense!" I retorted sharply. "I'll get through all right, and we can easily hold out till reinforcements come. Now get on your horse. Remember, the faster you go, the surer you 'll be to save us all."

He swung himself into the saddle, and turned for a moment to look at me, the tears streaming down his face. He seemed to think me as good as dead already.

"Good-by, Sam," I said.

"Good-by, Mas' Tom," and he put spurs to his horse and set off down the road.

I watched him until the trees hid him from sight, and then sprang upon my horse and started forward. Eight or ten miles, Polete had said, northward near the river. The road served me for some miles, and then I came to a cross road, which seemed well traveled. Not doubting that this led to the plantation of which I was in search, I turned into it, and proceeded onward as rapidly as the darkness of the woods permitted. Evening was at hand, and under the overlapping branches of the trees, the gloom grew deep and deeper. At last, away to the right, I caught the gleam of water, and with a sigh of relief knew I was near the river and so on the right road. The house could not be much farther on. With renewed vigor I urged my horse forward, and in a few minutes came to the edge of a clearing, and there before me was the house.

But it was not this which drew my eyes. Far away on the other side, concealed from the house

by a grove of trees, a shadowy line of tiny figures was emerging from the forest. Even as I looked, they vanished, and I rubbed my eyes in bewilderment. Yet I knew they had not deceived me. It was the war party preparing for the attack.

I set spurs to my horse and galloped the jaded beast toward the house as fast as his weary legs would carry him. As I drew near, I saw it was a large and well-built mansion. Lights gleamed through the open doors and windows. Evidently none there dreamed of danger, and I thanked God that I should be in time. In a moment I was at the door, and as I threw myself from the saddle, I heard from the open window a ringing laugh which thrilled me through and through, for I knew that the voice was Dorothy's.

CHAPTER XXV

I FIND MYSELF IN A DELICATE SITUATION

I STAGGERED up the steps, reeling as from a blow on the head, and a negro met me at the top.

"Where is your master?" I asked.

"Kun'l Ma'sh 's obah at Frederick, sah," he answered, looking at me with astonished eyes.

"Your mistress, then, quick, boy!" and as he turned toward the open door with a gesture of his hand, I hurried after him. There was a buzz of conversation in the room as we approached, but it ceased abruptly as we entered. I felt rather than saw that Dorothy was there, but I looked only at the plump little woman who half rose from her chair and stared at me in astonishment. I suppose my appearance was sufficiently surprising, but there was no time to think of that.

"A gen'leman t' see yo', Mis' Ma'sh," said my guide.

I had not caught the name before, but now I understood, and as I looked at the woman before me, I saw her likeness to her son.

"I am Captain Stewart, Mrs. Marsh," I said, controlling my voice as well as I could. "You may, perhaps, have heard of me. If not, there are others present who can vouch for me," but I did not move my eyes from her face.

"That is quite unnecessary, Captain Stewart," she cried, coming to me and giving me her hand very prettily. "I knew your grandfather, and you resemble him greatly." And then she stopped suddenly and grew very pale. "I remember now," she said. "You were in dear Harry's company."

"I was not in his company, but I knew and loved him well," I answered gently, taking both her hands and holding them tight in mine. "He was a brave and gallant boy, and lost his life while trying to save another's. I was with him when he fell."

She came close to me, and I could feel that she was trembling.

"And did he suffer?" she asked. "Oh, I cannot bear to think that he should suffer!"

"He did not suffer," I said. "He was shot through the heart. He did not have an instant's pain."

She was crying softly against my shoulder, but I held her from me.

"Mrs. Marsh," I said, "it is not of Harry we must think now, but of ourselves. This afternoon I learned that the Indians had planned an attack upon this place to-night. I sent my servant back to the fort for reinforcements and rode on to give the alarm. As I neared the house, I saw their war party skulking in the woods, so that the attack may not be long delayed."

Her face had turned ashen, and I was glad that I had kept her hands in mine, else she would have fallen.

"There is no danger," I added cheerily. "We must close the doors and windows, and we can easily keep them off till morning. The troops will be here by that time."

"Oh, do you think so?" she gasped.

"I am sure of it. Now, will you give the orders to the servants?"

But that was not necessary. The man who had shown me in had heard my words, and already had the other servants at work, closing and barring doors and windows. I saw that my assistance was not needed.

Then for the first time I looked at Dorothy. She was standing, leaning lightly with one hand upon a table, her eyes large and dark with terror, and her lips quivering, perhaps at the scene which had gone before. Her mother was seated by her, and it was to her I turned.

"I beg you to believe, Mrs. Stewart," I said, "that I did not know you and your daughter were here. Indeed, I thought you both were back at Riverview ere this."

"I believe you, Mr. Stewart," she answered softly. "I believe you to be a man of honor. I am sure I can trust you."

There was a tone in her voice which I had never heard before.

"Thank you," I said. "I shall try to deserve your trust," and then I turned away to look to our defenses.

I confess that, after the first five minutes, our situation appeared more perilous than I had at

first believed it. There was no white man in the house except myself, only a dozen negro servants, five of whom were men. A boy, whom I sent to the negro quarters to bring reinforcements, returned with the news that they were deserted, but he brought back with him the overseer, a man named Brightson, who was to prove his mettle before the night was out.

"I suspected this afternoon that there was something in the wind," he said to me, when I had explained our situation, "though I could not guess what it was. The niggers were so damned quiet, not singing in the field as they always do. They 've been mighty uneasy for a month back."

"Yes, I know," I interrupted. "It 's the same all over the colony. They think the French are going to help them kill the English. I 'm rather glad they ran away. How about these house niggers?"

"Oh, they 're all right, especially Pomp there. They 'll help us all they can."

"That makes seven of us, then. Can you shoot?"

"Try me," he answered simply.

"All right," I said. "We 'll pull through, I think. Indians are no good at anything but a surprise. I dare say some of the niggers have told them that there would be no men here to-night, so they think they 'll have an easy victory."

I had ordered Pomp to bring to the hall all the arms and ammunition in the house, and at this

moment he touched me on the elbow and told me this was done. Brightson and I looked over the collection, and found it as complete as could be desired. There were a dozen muskets, half a dozen pairs of pistols, a pile of swords and hangers, and ammunition in plenty. Evidently, Colonel Marsh had foreseen the possibility of an Indian attack, and was prepared to receive it. A tour of the house showed me, moreover, that it had been built with the same possibility in view. The doors and shutters were all strong and double-barred, and moreover were loopholed in a way that enabled us to command both approaches. I divided the arms, and posted Brightson with three men at the rear door, while I, with Pomp and another negro, took a place at the front. The women I sent to the top of the staircase, where they would be out of reach of any flying bullets, and could at the same time see what was going on. It was my aunt who protested against this arrangement.

"Can we not be of use, Captain Stewart?" she asked. "We could at least load the muskets for you."

"And I am sure that I could fire one," cried Dorothy.

"No, no," I laughed. "Time enough for that when there is need. They will not fancy the reception they will get, and may not return for a second dose." And with a sudden tenderness at my heart, right under the eyes of Mrs. Stewart, I reached up, caught Dorothy's hand, and kissed it. When I glanced up again, I saw that she was

smiling down at me, but I dared not look at her mother's face.

I had wondered at first why the attack was not made at once, but as I stood looking out at my loophole, I perceived the reason. The first shade of evening had found the moon high in the heavens, and it was now rapidly sinking toward the line of trees which marked the horizon. Once plunged behind them, the darkness would enable the Indians to creep up to the house unseen. I watched the moon as it dropped slowly down the sky. The lower rim just touched the treetops — then it was half behind them — then it had disappeared, and the world was plunged in darkness. I peered into the gloom with starting eyes, but could see nothing. I strained my ears, but could catch no sound ; three or four tense minutes passed, I could have sworn it was half an hour. One of the negro women on the stair screamed slightly, and, as though it were a signal, there came a great blow upon the door and pandemonium arose without. I fired blindly through my loophole, seized the musket at my side, and fired a second time, then emptied both my pistols out into the night. It seemed to me a hundred rifles were being fired at once. The hall was full of smoke and the pungent smell of powder, and then, in a second, all was still.

But only for a second. For there came another chorus of yells from a distance, and I could hear the negro women on the steps behind me wailing softly.

"Load!" I shouted. "Load, Pomp! They will be back in a minute," and then I ran to the other door to see how Brightson fared.

"All right," he said cheerfully, in answer to my question. "We could n't see 'em, but we emptied a good deal of lead out there, and I think from the way they yelled we must have hit two or three."

"Keep it up!" I cried. "We 'll drive them off easily," and with a word of encouragement to the negroes, I returned to my post. As I neared the door, I saw two figures in white working over the guns. It was Dorothy and her mother, helping the negroes reload. I sent them back to the stair with affected sternness, but I got a second hand-clasp from Dorothy as she passed me.

Then came another long period of waiting, which racked the nerves until the silence grew well-nigh insupportable. The darkness without was absolute, and there was not a sound to disturb the stillness. The minutes passed, and I was just beginning to hope that the Indians had already got enough, when I caught the faint shuffle of moccasined feet on the porch, and again the door was struck a terrific blow, which made it groan on its hinges. I fired out into the darkness as fast as I could lay down one gun and pick up another, and again the uproar ceased as suddenly as it had begun. As I turned away a moment from the loophole, I saw that Pomp had sunk down to the floor, his hands to his head.

"What is it, Pomp?" I cried, as I bent over him, but there was no need for him to answer,

even had he been able. A bullet, entering the loophole through which he was firing, had struck his left eye and entered the head. The other negro and myself laid him to one side against the wall, and when I went to him ten minutes later to see if there was anything I could do, he was dead. I turned away to the women to say some words of cheer and comfort to them, when a call from Brightson startled me.

"What has happened?" I asked, as I reached his side, and for answer he pointed out through the loophole.

"They have fired the nigger quarters and outbuildings," he said grimly. "They 'll probably try to fire the house next."

Even as we looked, the flames rose high above the roofs of the cabins and bathed the clearing in red radiance. In and out among the buildings we could see the Indians scampering, a hundred of them at least. Suddenly there was a chorus of yells, and two Indians appeared, rolling a cask before them into the belt of light.

"They 've found a keg of rum which was in my quarters," remarked Brightson; "now they 'll get crazy drunk. Our task has just begun, Captain Stewart."

I realized that he spoke the truth. Sober, an Indian will not stand up long in open fight, but drunk, he is a devil incarnate, — a fiend who will dare anything. I watched them as they knocked in the head of the cask and scooped up the raw spirits within. Then one of them began a melancholy

melody, which rose and fell in measured cadence, the other warriors gradually joining in and stamping the ground with their feet. Every minute one would run to the cask for another draught of the rum, and gradually their yells grew louder, their excitement more intense, as they rushed back and forth brandishing their weapons.

"They will soon be on us again," said Brightson in a low tone, but round and round they kept dancing, their leader in front in all his war trappings, the others almost naked, and for the most part painted black. No wonder I had been unable to see them in the darkness.

"They are going to attack us again, Tom, are they not?" asked a low voice at my elbow.

"Dorothy," I cried, "what are you doing here? Come, you must get back to the stair at once. The attack may come at any moment."

"You are treating me like a child," she protested, and her eyes flashed passionately. "Do you think we are cowards, we women? We will not be treated so! We have come to help you."

I looked at her in amazement. This was not the Dorothy I knew, but a braver, sweeter one. Her mother and Mrs. Marsh were behind her, both looking equally determined.

"Very well," I said, yielding with an ill grace. "You may sit on the floor here and load the guns as we fire them. That will be of greater service than if you fired them yourselves, and you will be quite out of reach of the bullets."

Dorothy sniffed contemptuously at my last words,

but deigned to sit down beside the other women. I placed the powder and ball where they could reach them easily, shaded a candle so that it threw its light only on the floor beside them, gave them a few directions about loading, and rejoined Brightson at his loophole. The Indians had stopped dancing, and were engaged in heaping up a great pile of burning logs.

"What are they about?" I asked.

Brightson looked at me with a grim light in his eyes.

"They 're going to try to burn us out," he said, and almost before he had spoken, the Indians seized a hundred burning brands from the fire, and waving them about their heads to fan them to a brighter flame, started toward us.

CHAPTER XXVI

A DESPERATE DEFENSE

I HAD barely time to get back to my post at the front door when they were upon us. I fired out into the rabble, and as I turned to get another gun, Dorothy was at my side and thrust it into my hands. There was no time to protest, even had I not realized, as I glanced into her eyes, that protestation would be useless. I fired a second time, when a tremendous explosion in the hall at my side startled me. I saw in a moment what had happened. The negro who was at the other loophole, dazed with fear, had discharged his gun straight into the ceiling overhead, and then, flinging it down, turned and ran. I could not pursue him, and grabbing a third gun from Dorothy, I fired again at the Indians, some of whom were swarming up the steps. As I did so, I stared an instant in amazement, for at the shot two men had fallen. As I turned back for another musket, I saw Mrs. Stewart at the other loophole, a smoking rifle in her hands, into which she was feverishly ramming another charge. It was a sight that made my heart leap, and I found myself suddenly admiring her. But before either of us could fire again, the Indians were gone, and a chorus of yells and sharp firing told me they

were attacking Brightson's side of the house. The noise died away after a moment, and they appeared again some distance off, looking back eagerly as though expecting something.

I saw with a start that their firebrands were no longer in their hands, and a moment later a puff of smoke from the corner of the house and the exultant yells of the savages warned me of our new danger. As I turned from the door, I met Brightson coming to seek me with an anxious face.

"They have fired the house, Captain Stewart," he said.

"I fear so. We must find the place and put out the flames."

Without a word he turned and followed me, and we opened the shutters a little here and there and looked out. We soon found what we were seeking. As the Indians had dashed around the house from front to rear, they had approached the side and piled their burning brands against the boards. We looked down from the window and saw that the house had already caught fire. In a few moments the flames would be beyond control. I was back to the hall in an instant.

"Is there any water in the house?" I asked of Mrs. Marsh, who was seated on the floor reloading our guns with a coolness which told me where her son had got his gallantry.

She looked at me an instant with face whitened by a new fear.

"Do you mean that the house is on fire?" she asked.

I nodded.

"There is no water," she said very quietly. "The well is a hundred yards from the house."

I beckoned to the negroes, who were listening in an anxious group, and hastened back to Brightson.

"There is no water," I said to him briefly. "I am going to open the shutter, drop down, and knock the fire away from the house. Do you be ready to pull me back in again, when I have finished."

"But it is death to do that," he exclaimed.

"No, no," I said. "You and the boys can keep them off. There is no other way."

He turned from me and looked about the room.

"This will save you," he cried, and ran to a heavy oak table which stood in one corner. I looked at him for a moment without understanding.

"We will throw it through the window," he explained. "You can drop behind it, and the Indians' bullets cannot reach you."

I saw his plan before he had finished, and we had the table at the window in an instant.

"Now, boys, all together," I cried, and as I threw the shutter back, they lifted the table to the sill and pushed it through. Before the Indians understood what was happening, I had dropped beside it, pulled it around to screen me, and was kicking the brands away from the building. Then they understood, and made a rush for the house, but met so sharp a reception from Brightson and his men that they fell back, and contented themselves with keeping up a sharp fusilade upon

my place of concealment. It was the work of only a few moments to kick away the brands and beat out the flames which were running along the side of the house. I signaled to Brightson that I was ready to return, and he opened a heavy fire upon the savages, which drove them for a moment out of musket range. Then throwing the shutter back, he leaned out, grasped my hands, and pulled me into the house without a scratch.

"That 's what I call genius," he observed, as he clapped the shutter tight and shot the bar into place. "I fancy they 're getting about enough."

"I trust so," I answered. "But in any event, our troops will be here in two or three hours more."

We stood for some time in silence and watched the Indians. They drew together near one of the burning buildings, apparently for a consultation, and then running to a cabin which had not yet been consumed, they tore off the heavy door and shutters.

"They have n't given it up yet," remarked Brightson grimly, "but they 're going to advance under cover this time."

Evidently some further preparation was necessary, for half a dozen of them worked away busily for some time, though we could not see what they were doing.

"What new deviltry are they up to now?" I heard Brightson mutter to himself, but I could find no answer to his question, for I knew little of this kind of warfare.

It was soon answered by the Indians themselves. A dozen of them ran around the house in different directions, each carrying a board, while the others, after paying a last visit to the cask of rum, grouped themselves opposite the rear door, but well out of range. We watched them in breathless silence. Those who were armed with shields approached nearer and nearer, until within perhaps fifty yards. We fired at them, but seemingly without effect. Then there was a moment of anxious waiting, and almost together a dozen streamers of fire rose high into the air and descended toward the house. Some fell harmlessly on the ground without, and we saw that they were arrows tipped with burning tow, but the most must have fallen upon the roof. A second and third shower of fire followed, and then the Indians withdrew behind their shields and quietly awaited the result.

"They have set fire to the roof," I gasped. "We must put it out at once, or we are lost."

"Leave that to me, Captain Stewart," said Brightson quietly, and I never admired the courage of a man more than I did his at that moment. "I will get out on the roof, and throw the arrows down. I don't believe they can hit me."

It was the only thing to do, and he was gone even as I nodded my assent. Five minutes passed, and then the Indians began to yell again, and I knew that Brightson had reached the roof. Almost at the same instant, the main body of the savages advanced at a run, some of them carrying

a heavy log, the others holding boards in front of them. We sent a dozen bullets among them before they reached the door, but they came on without faltering. One man, very tall and clad in a suit of fringed buckskin, ran in front and urged them on. I fired at him twice, but he came on as before, and I knew that I had wasted the bullets.

Up the steps they came, yelling like devils fresh from hell, and brought the log crashing against the door, while others thrust their muskets through the loopholes and fired into the hallway. One of the negroes sank down without a groan, the blood spurting from his neck, and another dropped his gun with a yell, and, clapping his hands to his face, ran shrieking down the hall.

Again the log thundered against the door, one of the bars sprung loose, and half a dozen shots were fired into the hallway. I saw that the door could hold but a moment longer, and shouting to the negroes to fall back, I retreated to the stair, grabbing up a hanger as I passed the place where we had piled the arms. Running back again, I caught up a bag of powder and another of ball, so that we might not be utterly without ammunition, and with these sped up the stair, pushing the women before me.

We were not an instant too soon, for the door crashed down at the next blow, and the savages poured over the threshold. They paused a moment to see what had become of us, and this gave us opportunity to pour a volley into them. Then on they came, the man in buckskin still leading

them. As they reached the foot of the stair, I took steady aim at him with my pistol and pulled the trigger. But he seemed to have some intuition of his danger, for he stooped suddenly, and it was the man behind him who threw up his hands, sprang into the air, and fell backward. They faltered only for an instant, and then swarmed up the steps, their greased faces gleaming in the powder flashes. I thought it as good as ended, and throwing down my musket, caught up my hanger for a final stand, when something was thrown past me and bounded down the stair. It swept half the Indians off their feet and carried them down before it, and the others, not knowing what had happened, turned and ran down after them. Nor, indeed, did I know until afterward, when I learned that Brightson, coming down from the roof and taking in our peril at a glance, had caught up a great log from the fireplace in the upper hall, where it was awaiting the winter lighting, and, with a strength little short of superhuman, had hurled it down upon the savages.

It gave us respite for a moment, but it was certain they would charge again, and I knew too well what the result would be, for the last of the negroes had flung down his gun and run away, leaving only Brightson and me to guard the women. It was Mrs. Marsh who spoke the saving word.

"Why not retreat to the roof?" she said. "They could not get at us there."

It was the only chance of safety, so to the roof we went, the women first, and we two bringing

up the rear. Once there, we closed the trap and waited. In a moment we heard the yell which told us that our retreat had been discovered, and then again came silence.

"This is no ordinary Indian attack," said Brightson, who was wiping the sweat and powder stains from his face. "There 's a Frenchman leading them, and maybe two or three. Did you see that fellow in buckskin who ran in front?"

"Yes," I answered gloomily. "I have fired at him three times, but always missed him."

"Well, he is no Indian," said Brightson, "in spite of his painted face. If they had n't had that cask of rum and him to lead them, they would have cleared out of this long ago. They have no stomach for this kind of work, unless they are full of liquor."

The sky in the east was turning from black to gray, and the dawn was not far distant.

"Our troops will soon be here," I said, and went to the women where they were crouching behind a protecting gable. Dorothy, her mother, and Mrs. Marsh were sitting side by side, and they all smiled at me as I approached.

"I think we are safe here," I said as cheerily as I could, "and the reinforcements cannot be far away. I know Colonel Washington too well to think he would delay a moment longer than necessary to start to our relief."

"You have made a brave defense, Captain Stewart," said Mrs. Marsh earnestly. "I realize what would have been our fate long ere this, had you not been here."

"Nay, madame," I interrupted, "I could have done little by myself. I have learned to-night that the women of Virginia are no less gallant than the men."

"Come, come," laughed Dorothy, "this is not a drawing-room that you need think you must flatter us, Tom."

I glanced at Mrs. Stewart, and saw with some surprise that she too was smiling.

"'T was not flattery," I protested, "but a simple statement of fact. And there is another here," I added, turning to Mrs. Marsh, "whose conduct should be remembered. I have never seen a braver man," and I glanced at Brightson where he sat, his musket across his knees.

"I shall remember it," she said, as she followed my eyes.

A burst of yells and a piercing cry from below interrupted us.

"What was that?" asked Dorothy, white to the lips.

"They have found one of the negroes," I answered, as calmly as I could. "They ran away, and must have hidden somewhere in the house."

We sat listening, the women pale and horror-stricken, and even Brightson and I no little moved. The yells and the single shrill cry were repeated a second time and then a third, and finally all was still again save for the negro women wailing softly, as they rocked themselves to and fro behind the gable, their arms about their knees. I crept back to my station by the trap and waited

feverishly for what should happen next. We could hear steps in the hall below, a short consultation and a clanking of arms, and then all was still.

"Here they come," said Brightson, between his teeth, and even as he spoke, the trap was thrown outward by a great force from below, and the savage swarm poured forth upon the roof. I struck madly at the first man, and saw another fall, pierced by a bullet from Brightson's gun, and then he was down and I heard the sough of a knife thrust into him.

"They are coming! They are coming!" screamed a shrill voice behind me, and I turned to see Dorothy upright on the roof, pointing away to the southward. And there, sure enough, at the edge of the clearing, was a troop of Virginians, galloping like mad. Ah, how welcome were those blue uniforms! We could hear them cheering, and, with a leaping heart, I saw it was Colonel Washington himself who led them.

For an instant the Indians stood transfixed, and then, with a yell, turned back toward the trap. All save one. I saw him raise his musket to his shoulder and take deliberate aim at Dorothy as she stood there outlined in white against the purple sky. I sprang at him with a cry of rage, and dragged his gun toward me as he pulled the trigger. There was a burst of flame in my face, a ringing in my ears, I felt the earth slipping from me, and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVII

I COME INTO MY OWN

It was long before I realized that that white, bandaged thing lying on the bed before me was my hand. I gazed at it curiously for a while and stirred it slightly to make sure, — what a mighty effort that little motion cost me! — and then I became aware that a breeze was passing across my face, and a peculiar thing about it was that it came and went regularly like the swinging of a pendulum. And when I raised my eyes to see what this might mean, I found myself looking straight into the astonished face of Sam, my boy.

He stared at me for a moment, his eyes starting from his head, and then with a loud cry he dropped the fan he had been wielding and ran from the room, clapping his hands together as he went, as I had heard negroes do under stress of great excitement. What could it mean? Again my eyes fell upon the queer, bandaged thing which must be my hand. Had there been an accident? I could not remember, and while my mind was still wrestling with the question in a helpless, flabby way, I heard the swish of skirts at the door, and there entered who but Dorothy!

"Why, Dorothy!" I cried, and then stopped, astonished at the sound of my own voice. It was not my voice at all, — I had never heard it before, — and it seemed to come from a great way off. And what astonished me more than anything else was that Dorothy did not seem in the least surprised by it.

"Yes, Tom," she said, and she came to the bedside and laid her hand upon my head. Such a cool, soft little hand it was. "Why, the fever is quite gone! You will soon be well again."

I tried to raise my hand to take hers, but it lay there like a great dead weight, and I could scarcely move it. I know not what it was, but at the sight of her standing there so strong and brave and sweet, and the thought of myself so weak and helpless, the tears started from my eyes and rolled down my cheeks in two tiny rivulets. She seemed to understand my thought, for she placed one of her hands in mine, and with the other wiped my tears away. I love to think of her always as I saw her then, bending over me with infinite pity in her face and wiping my tears away. The moment of weakness passed, and my brain seemed clearer than it had been.

"Have I been ill?" I asked.

"Very ill, Tom," she said. "But now you will get well very quickly."

"What was the matter with me, Dorothy?"

She looked at me a moment and seemed hesitating for an answer.

"I think you would better go to sleep now,

Tom," she said at last, "and when you wake again, I will tell you all about it."

"Very well," I answered submissively, and indeed, at the time, my brain seemed so weary that I had no wish to know more.

She gently took her hand from mine and went to a table, where she poured something from a bottle into a glass. I followed her with my eyes, noting how strong and confident and beautiful she was.

"Drink this, Tom," she said, bringing the glass back to the bed and holding it to my lips. I gulped it down obediently, and then watched her again as she went to the window and drew the blind. She came back in a moment and sat down in the chair from which I had startled Sam. She picked up the fan which he had dropped, and waved it softly to and fro above me, smiling gently down into my face. And as I lay there watching her, the present seemed to slip away and leave me floating in a land of clouds.

But when I opened my eyes again, it all came back to me in an instant, and I called aloud for Dorothy. She was bending over me almost before the sound of my voice had died away.

"Oh, thank God!" I cried. "It was only a dream, then! You are safe, Dorothy, — there were no Indians, — tell me it was only a dream."

"Yes, I am quite safe, Tom," she answered, and took my hand in both of hers.

"And the Indians?" I asked.

"Were frightened away by Colonel Washington and his men, who killed many of them."

I closed my eyes for a moment, and tried to reconstruct the drama of that dreadful night.

"Dorothy," I asked suddenly, "was Brightson killed?"

"Yes, Tom," she answered softly.

I sighed.

"He was a brave man," I said. "No man could have been braver."

"Only one, I think," and she smiled down at me tremulously, her eyes full of tears.

"Yes, Colonel Washington," I said, after a moment's thought. "Perhaps he is braver."

"I was not thinking of Colonel Washington, Tom," and her lips began to tremble.

I gazed at her a moment in amazement.

"You do not mean me, Dorothy?" I cried. "Oh, no; I am not brave. You do not know how frightened I grow when the bullets whistle around me."

She laid her fingers on my lips with the prettiest motion in the world.

"Hush," she said. "I will not listen to such blasphemy."

"At least," I protested, "I am not so brave as you, — no, nor as your mother, Dorothy. I had no thought that she was such a gallant woman."

"Ah, you do not know my mother!" she cried. "But you shall know her some day, Tom. Nor has she known you, though I think she is beginning to know you better, now."

There were many things I wished to hear, — many questions that I asked, — and I learned how

Sam had galloped on until he reached the fort, how he had given the alarm, how Colonel Washington himself had ridden forth twenty minutes later at the head of fifty men, — all who could be spared, — and had spurred on through the night, losing the road more than once and searching for it with hearts trembling with fear lest they should be too late, and how they had not been too late, but had saved us, — saved Dorothy.

"And I think you are dearer to the commander's heart than any other man," she added. "Indeed, he told me so. For he stayed here with you for three days, watching at your bedside, until he found that he could stay no longer, and then he tore himself away as a father leaves his child. I had never seen him moved so deeply, for you know he rarely shows emotion."

Ah, Dorothy, you did not know him as did I! You had not been with him at Great Meadows, nor beside the Monongahela, nor when we buried Braddock there in the road in the early morning. You had not been with him at Winchester when wives cried to him for their husbands, and children for their parents, nor beside the desolated hearths of a hundred frontier families. And of a sudden it came over me as a wave rolls up the beach, how much of sorrow and how little of joy had been this man's portion. Small wonder that his face seemed always sad and that he rarely smiled.

Dorothy had left me alone a moment with my thoughts, and when she came back, she brought her mother with her. I had never seen her look at me

as she looked now, and for the first time perceived that it was from her Dorothy got her eyes. She stood in the doorway for a moment, gazing down at me, and then, before I knew what she was doing, had fallen on her knees beside my bed and was kissing my bandaged hand.

"Why, aunt!" I cried, and would have drawn it from her.

"Oh, Tom," she sobbed, and clung to it, "can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, aunt?" I cried again, yet more amazed. "What have you done that you should stand in need of my forgiveness?"

"What have I done?" she asked, and raised her face to mine. "What have I not done, rather? I have been a cold, hard woman, Tom. I have forgot what right and justice and honor were. But I shall forget no longer. Do you know what I have here in my breast?" she cried, and she snatched forth a paper and held it before my eyes. "You could never guess. It is a letter you wrote to me."

"A letter I wrote to you?" I repeated, and then as I saw the superscription, I felt my cheeks grow hot. For it read, "To be delivered at once to Mrs. Stewart."

"Ay," she said, "a letter you wrote to me, and which I should never have received had you not forgot it and left it lying on my table in my study at Riverview. Can you guess what I felt, Tom, when they brought it to me here, and I opened it and read that you had gone to the swamp alone

amongst those devils? I thought that you were dead, since the letter had been delivered, and the whole extent of the wrong I had done you sprang up before me. But they told me you were not dead, — that Colonel Washington had come for you, and that you had ridden hastily away with him. I could guess the story, and I should never have known that you had saved the place but for the chance which made you forget this letter."

I had tried to stop her more than once. She had gone on without heeding me, but now she paused.

"It was nothing," I said. "Nothing. There was no real danger. Thank Long. He was with me. He is a better man than I."

"Oh, yes," she cried, "they are all better men than you, I dare say! Do not provoke me, sir, or you will have me quarreling with you before I have said what I came here to say. Can you guess what that is?" and she paused again, to look at me with a great light in her eyes.

But I was far past replying. I gazed up at her, bewildered, dazzled. I had never known this woman.

"I see you cannot guess," she said. "Of course you cannot guess! How could you, knowing me as you have known me? 'T is this. Riverview is yours, Tom, and shall be always yours from this day forth, as of right it has ever been."

Riverview mine? No, no, I did not want Riverview. It was something else I wanted.

"I shall not take it, aunt," I said quite firmly.

"I am going to make a name for myself, — with my sword, you know," I added with a smile, "and when I have once done that, there is something else which I shall ask you for, which will be dearer to me — oh, far dearer — than a hundred Riverviews."

What ailed the women? Here was Dorothy too on her knees and kissing my bandaged hand.

"Oh, Tom, Tom," she cried, "do you not understand?"

"Understand?" I repeated blankly. "Understand what, Dorothy?"

"Don't you remember, dear, what happened just before the troops came?"

"Oh, very clearly," I answered. "The Indians got Brightson down and stabbed him, and just then you sprang up and cried the troops were coming, and sure enough, there they were just entering the clearing, and the Indians paused only for one look and then fled down the stairs as fast as they could go. 'T was you who saved us all, Dorothy."

"Oh, but there was something more!" she cried. "There was one Indian who did not run, Tom, but who stopped to aim at me. I saw him do it, and I closed my eyes, for I knew that he would kill me, and I heard his gun's report, but no bullet struck me. For it was you whom it struck, dear, through your hand and into your side, and for long we thought you dying."

"Yes," I said, "but you see I am not dying, nor like to die, dear Dorothy, so that I may still rejoin the troops erelong."

She was looking at me with streaming eyes.

"Do you mean that I am not going to get well, Dorothy?" I asked, for I confess her tears frightened me.

"Oh, not so bad as that, dear!" she cried. "Thank God, not so bad as that! But your hand, Tom, your right hand is gone. You can never wield a sword again, dear, never go to war. You will have to stay at home with me."

I know not how it was, but she was in my arms, and her lips were on mine, and I knew that there was no more parting for us.

AND SO, GOOD-BY

WELL, a right hand is a little price to pay for the love of a wife like mine, and if I have made no name in the world, I at least live happy in it, which is perhaps a greater thing. And I have grown to use my left hand very handily. I have learnt to write with it, as the reader knows, — and when I hold my wife to me, I have her ever next my heart.

It is the fashion, I know well, to stop the story on the altar's steps, and leave the reader to guess at all that may come after, but as I turn over the pages I have writ, they seem too much a tale of failure and defeat, and I would not have it so. For the lessons learned at Fort Necessity and Winchester and at Duquesne have given us strength to drive the French from the continent and the Indian from the frontier. So that now we dwell in peace, and live our lives in quiet and content, save for some disagreements with the king about our taxes, which Lord Grenville has made most irksome.

And even to my dearest friend, whose life, as I have traced it here, has been so full of sorrow and reverse, has come great happiness. He is honored of all men, and has found love as well, for he has brought a wife home to Mount Vernon. Dorothy declares that Mistress Washington is the very

image of that Mary Cary who used him so ill years ago, — but this may be only a woman's leaning toward romance.

Indeed, we have a romance in our own home, — a bright-eyed girl of twenty, who, I fear, is soon to leave us, if a certain pert young blade who lives across the river has his way. It will be I who give her away at the altar, for her father lies dead beside the Monongahela, — brave, gentle-hearted Spiltdorph. My eyes grow dim even now when I think of you, yet I trust that I have done as you would have had me do. For I found the girl at Hampton, after a weary search, — perhaps some day I shall tell the story.

It is in the old seat by the river's edge I write these words, and as I lay down the pen, my hand falls on those carved letters, T and D, with a little heart around them, — very faint, now, and worn with frequent kisses, — and as I lift my head, I see coming to me across the grass the woman who carved them there and whom I love.

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